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		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
		5e. TASK NUMBER		
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
14. ABSTRACT				
15. SUBJECT TERMS				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:		17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

**JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE**

**JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



**MAKING SENSE OF IRREGULAR WARFARE, IRREGULAR CHALLENGES,  
AND THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE SUBMARINE FORCE**

by

**Michael T. Kubiniec**

*Captain, U.S. Navy*



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AND THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE SUBMARINE FORCE**

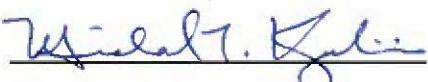
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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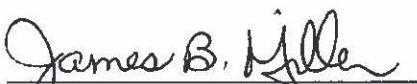
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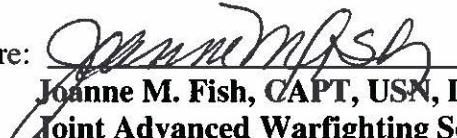
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## **ABSTRACT**

Current National, Department of Defense and U.S. Navy strategies place as much emphasis on preventing conflict as they do on winning them. Failing and unstable countries and regions around the world foster an environment for broad irregular warfare challenges that includes insurgents, violent extremists and criminals, and others who pose a threat to U.S. national interests and global security. Countering these irregular challenges in and from the maritime domain is the Navy's espoused prioritized approach which concentrates on preventing, limiting and eliminating those contributing factors which lead to regional instability, insurgency, crime and a base for violent extremism. The submarine, with an ability to provide persistent and sustained at-sea operations, is a unique multi-mission, high demand Navy resource, available to contribute to joint efforts to counter irregular threats. The submarine force should develop a comprehensive strategy for optimizing its contribution to the joint force in confronting irregular challenges as well as traditional or conventional threat approaches.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Professor Frederick Kienle. This thesis is only a direct result of relentless support, persistent positive encouragement, extreme patience, and unfaltering confidence in me. Thank you very much Professor Kienle.

I would also like to thank my fellow classmates in Seminar Three for their tremendous support, patience and understanding in helping me through this effort.

Finally, words alone cannot express my thanks to my wife and daughter for their love and encouragement during this arduous academic journey. I realize the separation and long time away from home placed significant burdens on you. Without your love, support and understanding, completing this endeavor would not have been possible.

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## INTRODUCTION

Today the United States is engaged in a global contest against violent extremist organizations. Our Nation's strategic imperative is to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qa'ida and its networks of violence and hatred.<sup>1</sup> In 2007, the three service chiefs of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard cosigned the first-ever unified maritime strategy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, and offered their belief that "preventing wars is just as important as winning them."<sup>2</sup> However, in order to prevent war, policy makers and military professionals first have to expose and then fully comprehend the conditions that foster and contribute to an environment where failing and unstable governments, insurgents, violent extremists and criminals pose a threat to United States national interests and global security. If war becomes unavoidable, then the country needs to fully understand the fight that lies ahead. Clausewitz clearly articulated this concept in *On War*: "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."<sup>3</sup> The war against violent extremist organizations should be understood for the type of war it is; an irregular war that poses a serious threat to the United States and to global security as a whole. This irregular war requires unique responses, solutions, and approaches to overcome the many resultant challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> President, Report, "National Security Strategy," (May 2010): 4.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, (Washington, DC: October 2007), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 100.

The challenges confronting our national security are of a more globalized nature than ever before. Contributing factors include: the expansion of free trade, intertwined and mutually dependent global economies, technology improvements in the area of energy development, climate change which may potentially open up new maritime shipping routes, and increased proliferation of weapons technology and information. The economic costs for creating and entering into conflict in this environment can be lower than ever before. Nation states and non-state actors now have ready, low cost access to technology, that through its asymmetric use, can present a significant threat equal to the more traditional or conventional means of warfare. New and innovative solutions are needed to effectively confront these new challenges prescribed by those willing to oppose our national interest.

During the last decade, confronting irregular threats has taken on increased importance and priority across the U.S. military. National leadership has articulated this new found emphasis in recent documents: the 2010 “National Security Strategy,”<sup>4</sup> the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*,<sup>5</sup> and the 2011 *National Military Strategy*.<sup>6</sup> These documents clearly emphasize the requirement for building joint and multi-national force capability and capacity within the U.S. armed forces and our partner nations to specifically confront irregular threats. The urgency and call to action have never been more evident and this is detailed in key national level documents and by international action.

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<sup>4</sup> President, 21.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, DC: February 1, 2010), 102.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 8, 2011), 3.

Global partnerships and whole-of-nation approaches are the new norm in countering extremism.<sup>7</sup> No one country, including the United States, has sufficient resources to unilaterally confront these irregular threats throughout the global domain. Governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations must now form global partnerships to counter these threats. Innovative solutions and counters to the irregular threat must be sought by a wide range of stakeholders. In many cases, these solutions may be novel uses of existing capabilities and unique applications of existing organizations.

In an era of limited resources and competing priorities, one significant challenge to the joint force in countering irregular challenges is employing the right force at the right time, matching resource capability with the mission requirement. In certain situations and applications, the submarine can provide a unique and vast array of multi-mission capabilities and options to the joint force commander. This study posits that the submarine provides an existing, although perhaps limited capability, to counter emerging irregular threats, if innovative solutions are applied.

The submarine is a unique Navy asset available to the Combatant Commander with the capability to provide persistent and sustained operations in the maritime domain for the joint force. Operating very close to shore, in the littorals or in the broader maritime domain, it has the ability to stealthily monitor, prevent, limit and interdict irregular threats and adversaries.<sup>8</sup> These missions are somewhat similar to the submarine's traditional missions of: anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare,

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Commander, U.S. Submarine Force, *Strategic Communications Plan: Communicating The Unique Value Of The Silent Service*, (Norfolk, VA: Commander, Submarine Force, March 2009), 4.

intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, strike warfare, mine warfare, counter drug operations, and special operations that are typically associated with the submarine force.<sup>9</sup> But what must the submarine force do today to capitalize on its existing capabilities in support of new missions, specifically, those of confronting irregular challenges that are now challenging Combatant Commanders? How are we shaping the force for the future in hardware and technology acquisition programs, shipboard training, qualifications and personnel assignments to provide a relevant, adaptable and ready capability to combat irregular threats? What initiatives, such as bi-lateral or regionally based military-to-military programs, can the submarine force take the lead in a non-traditional role such as addressing irregular challenges? This study explores answers to those questions.

An understanding of several key concepts is in order to explore this thesis. First, it is necessary to develop an acceptable working definition for irregular warfare, to discuss the concept of operations behind the “five pillars of irregular warfare:” counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency and stability operations; and to discuss the challenges to the joint force. The military services approach to irregular warfare is discussed with an overview of doctrine, concepts, and efforts in support of joint force requirements. This provides foundation for understanding, genesis and foundational underpinning of irregular challenges.

Next, the relatively new concept of irregular challenges, as discussed in the Chief of Naval Operations’ vision paper are introduced, defined and analyzed to understand how it differs from the common uses of the term irregular warfare and its impact to the joint force. Irregular challenges, with nuanced differences from irregular warfare, are

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<sup>9</sup> Commander, U.S. Submarine Force, “Submarine Force Brief,” PowerPoint Presentation, Norfolk, VA, 2010, 5.

generally unique to the U.S. Navy lexicon. Understanding this difference is important in determining the submarine force's role in confronting irregular challenges.

The Navy's approach to confronting irregular challenges is then reviewed.

Derived from the guidance contained in the Navy's key documents, countering irregular threats is accomplished primarily through preventive maritime security and conflict deterrence and less through the direct application of kinetic and combat force.

The submarine force's capabilities in confronting irregular challenges are presented with a discussion of historical context, comparing and matching current capabilities to requirements, emerging technologies to increase submarine capabilities, personnel manning and training requirements, non-traditional methods of submarine force capabilities and contributions, and implications to the joint force.

Finally, this paper concludes that the submarine force has limited capacity for optimizing its contribution to the joint force in confronting these U.S. Navy-defined irregular challenges. Competing submarine force traditional operational requirements, leadership perspectives and paradigms, and other limitations suggest that the submarine as having limited applications for effectively confronting irregular challenges. Finally, this paper presents several recommendations for consideration and further research to ensure that the submarine force's role in irregular warfare and confronting irregular challenges is a positive and effective contribution to our nation's efforts to ensure global security while confronting the irregular threats posed by state and non-state actors, insurgents, criminals and violent extremist organizations.

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **WHAT IS IRREGULAR WARFARE?**

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> ushered in a new era of unconventional challenges and strategic uncertainty which have had a negative influence on United States' security interests around the world. As these threats have evolved, so too must our military adapt to be able to confront these new challenges as well as those we are currently prepared to meet. According to the 2005 *National Defense Strategy* (NDS), policy makers as well as military leaders must transform how we think about confronting unconventional threats and develop policies and strategic objectives in order to achieve national objectives by creating favorable security conditions around the world.<sup>1</sup> Uncertainty is the one constant that we can count on in the future. Since it is not possible to predict future national security challenges, we must look to trends and develop national strategies to handle unanticipated events. It is not enough to simply react to change.

#### **Evolution of Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concepts**

The 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) provides useful and detailed insight into the transformation needed by policy makers and military leaders. The QDR notes that we are confronted with a “long war, a war that is irregular in nature,” and that “this war requires the U.S. military to adopt unconventional and indirect approaches.”<sup>2</sup> “The United States must be prepared to wage this war in many locations simultaneously

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: March 2005), v.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, DC: February 6, 2006), 1.

and for some years to come” and “must also remain vigilant in an era of surprise and uncertainty and prepare to prevent, deter or defeat a wider range of asymmetric threats.”<sup>3</sup>

The 2005 NDS and 2006 QDR provided strategic guidance that led to the development of the *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC) Version 1.0*, co-authored by the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Special Operations Command in September 2007.<sup>4</sup> Two of the main purposes of this document were to formally define the term irregular warfare and to describe how the joint force would conduct irregular warfare to achieve national security objectives over the next twenty years.<sup>5</sup>

The *IW JOC Version 1.0* presented the official definition for irregular warfare, which has since been incorporated into Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*: “A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.”<sup>6</sup> This definition provided a foundation to understand the concept of irregular warfare and its related issues.

During the following two years, the Department of Defense advanced its understanding regarding the concepts associated with irregular warfare with published articles and documents by senior military leaders. In the January 2009 *Quadrennial Roles and Mission Review Report*, irregular warfare was no longer considered the sole purview

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC) Version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: September 11, 2007), iii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, As Amended Through January 31, 2011, (Washington, DC: November 8, 2010), 189.

of special operations forces. Irregular warfare was now defined as one of the six Department of Defense enduring core mission areas.<sup>7</sup> Further, it promulgated that “The Department’s irregular warfare vision is to equip the joint force with capabilities, doctrine, organizations, training, leadership, and operating concepts needed to make it as proficient in irregular warfare as it is in conventional warfare.”<sup>8</sup> General purpose forces would now have increased roles and responsibilities with respect to conducting irregular warfare.

Likewise, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, writes in his *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, that we must “build a balanced and versatile force” with the implication that the joint force must now be structured to be able to accomplish a wide variety of missions, while improving its combat capabilities with respect to irregular enemies.<sup>9</sup>

The 2008 Unified Command Plan did not specifically task U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) to be the synchronizing commander for irregular warfare.<sup>10</sup> However, Department of Defense Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)*, assigned USJFCOM with the responsibility to “Assist the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by leading the collaborative development of joint IW-relevant doctrine.”<sup>11</sup> General James N. Mattis, then Commander, USJFCOM, issued his *Irregular Warfare Vision* whereby USJFCOM would take lead responsibility for preparing and providing joint forces in

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Mission Review Report*, (Washington, DC: January 2009), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, (Washington, DC: January 15, 2009), 28-29.

<sup>10</sup> President, Report, “Unified Command Plan,” (December 17, 2008): 21-23.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)*, (Washington, DC: December 1, 2008), 10.

carrying out irregular warfare missions.<sup>12</sup> Implementation of this vision was now his command's priority and that "USJFCOM will lead the Department of Defense in the collaborative effort to deploy joint forces that are as effective in conducting irregular warfare as they are in conventional warfare."<sup>13</sup> The vision also outlined several initiatives to improve the proficiency and competency of the joint force which include: concept development and experimentation, capability development / joint integration and interoperability, training and education, joint force provision / global force management and external engagement.<sup>14</sup> USJFCOM would work closely with U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to update the *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept*.

Finally, writing in the Spring 2009 issue of *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, Admiral Eric T. Olson, Commander, USSOCOM, stated "...the U.S. military must be able to employ a balanced approach to warfare, carefully blending the full spectrum of military, para-military and civil action to achieve success."<sup>15</sup> Admiral Olson then goes on to develop a key concept not specifically articulated heretofore: "The type of warfare we fight on the ground is not determined by what forces we have on the ground; it is determined by our adversaries."<sup>16</sup> In other words, today's adaptable irregular enemy has defined the "rules of the fight" to its advantage in which there are no rules, by leveraging the complex political and cultural operational environment through which military and non-military means can be a disruptive force in destabilizing countries and

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Irregular Warfare Vision*, (Norfolk, VA: March 11, 2009), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 2-5.

<sup>15</sup> Admiral Eric T. Olson, U.S. Navy, "A Balanced Approach to Irregular Warfare," *The Journal of International Security Affairs* Volume 0, Issue 16 (Spring 2009): 17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 18.

regions. Therefore, U.S. armed forces have to change and adapt as well in order to confront an ever changing enemy.

Admiral Olsen offers two approaches for influencing our irregular adversaries, direct and indirect. The direct approach is carried out by conventional military forces in defeating the enemy through traditional means; and the indirect approach focuses on shaping and influencing the environment itself. Long-term success hinges on changing behavior.<sup>17</sup> Admiral Olson points out the fact, that although the concepts of balancing direct and indirect approaches are not new to irregular warfare, he believes this is the nature of warfare we will experience in the years ahead, particularly in countering irregular threats. Direct action will always remain necessary, but to create lasting and enduring effects, this can only occur through using indirect approaches while working with and through our allies and partners and host nation.<sup>18</sup>

The continued evolution and maturation of concepts and thinking associated with irregular warfare resulted in a second revision to the *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0* that was released in May 2010; co-signed by General Mattis (USJFCOM) and Admiral Olson (USSOCOM), who outlined the joint force's new approach for improving its capabilities to prevent, deter, disrupt, or defeat irregular threats while they are in the incipient stage and to address the conditions that foster them.<sup>19</sup> The new focus of countering irregular threats, not just the conduct of irregular warfare, is appropriately captured in the renaming of the document: *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0*.

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<sup>17</sup> Olson, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0*, (Washington, DC: May 17, 2010), 5.

*Version 2.0* continues to build on previously mentioned source reference documents citing irregular warfare as a core mission area,<sup>20</sup> the requirement to “build a balanced and versatile” force especially in confronting irregular threats,<sup>21</sup> recognizing the strategic importance of irregular warfare to conventional or traditional warfare,<sup>22</sup> and the importance of whole-of-government efforts,<sup>23</sup> the interagency, multinational partners and the host nation.

In order to maximize the prospect of success, the joint force must understand the population and operating environment, including the complex historical, political, socio-cultural, religious, economic and other causes of violent conflict. The joint force must adopt collaborative frameworks to understand, plan, act, assess, and adapt in concert with U.S. Government (USG) interagency and multinational partners and the host nation.<sup>24</sup>

Within the context of this understanding of the operating environment, five types of activities or operations (the 5 “pillars” of conducting irregular warfare) comprise the strategy for addressing irregular threats; these include: counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, and stability operations. These activities or pillars, which can be carried out in sequence, in parallel or in a blended fashion,<sup>25</sup> are briefly described in the following sections. These must be understood to address the requirements for irregular warfare and for countering irregular threats.

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<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Mission Review Report*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, 28-29.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-07, *Stability Operations*, (Washington, DC: October 2008), 1-4.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## **Counterterrorism**

Counterterrorism is defined as: “Actions taken directly against terrorist networks and indirectly to influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks.”<sup>26</sup>

Counterterrorism is generally considered to be offensive-type operations conducted by special operations forces. However, military solutions are not sufficient since the focus of irregular warfare is on the relevant population and the operating environment might be very complex. Since the Department of State has the responsibility to develop policy to end state sponsorship of terrorism<sup>27</sup> by establishing long-term security and stability strategies, counterterrorism must include whole-of-government approaches, involving all the instruments of national power, in order to undermine an adversary’s influence and legitimacy in the eyes of a relevant population. Special operations and conventional forces as well as the interagency, international partners and host nations act through unity of effort by using both direct and indirect means to defeat violent extremists and to continually shape the operational environment to one that is inhospitable for their existence.<sup>28</sup>

## **Unconventional Warfare**

Unconventional warfare is defined as:

A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes, but is not

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, 86.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-26, *Counterterrorism*, (Washington, DC: November 13, 2009), vi.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., I-12.

limited to, guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery.<sup>29</sup>

Along with counterterrorism and foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare is one of the nine core tasks performed by special operations forces (SOF); specific tasks, performed by no other Department of Defense forces under unique conditions and circumstances.<sup>30</sup> Unconventional warfare is generally thought of as being military operations in support of an ongoing resistance movement occurring in a region or country, conducted independently from conventional military forces, with political, military and psychological objectives resulting in organizing and mobilizing the local population against the hostile government or other occupying non-state actor or proxy.<sup>31</sup> Unconventional warfare includes the following five activities:

- Guerrilla Warfare. These are military and paramilitary operations conducted by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces in adversary-held or hostile territory. It is the military aspect of an insurgency or other armed resistance movement. Guerrilla warfare techniques can undermine the legitimacy of the existing government or an occupying power as well as destroy, degrade, or divert military capabilities.
- Subversion. These operations are designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a regime or nation. The clandestine nature of subversion dictates that the underground elements perform the bulk of the activity.
- Sabotage. These are operations that involve an act or acts with intent to injure, interfere with, or obstruct the national defense of a country by willfully injuring or destroying, or attempting to injure or destroy, any national defense or war material, premises, or utilities, to include human and natural resources. Sabotage selectively disrupts, destroys, or neutralizes hostile capabilities with a minimum expenditure of manpower and materiel.
- Intelligence Activities. These activities assess areas of interest ranging from political and military personalities to the military capabilities of friendly and adversary forces. SOF perform intelligence activities ranging

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<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, 383.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, (Washington, DC: December 17, 2003), II-3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., II-7-II-8.

from developing information critical to planning and conducting operations, to assessing the capabilities and intentions of indigenous and coalition forces.

- Unconventional Assisted Recovery (UAR). These operations consist of UW forces establishing and operating unconventional assisted recovery mechanisms and unconventional assisted recovery teams. UAR operations are designed to seek out, contact, authenticate, and support military and other selected personnel as they move from an adversary-held, hostile, or sensitive area to areas under friendly control.<sup>32</sup>

Although primarily considered a SOF activity, significant participation from the interagency, such as the Central Intelligence Agency and Department of State, and other instruments of national power, are required to support the political and military aspects of unconventional warfare. Additional assistance may also be required from partner nations for basing and over flight rights and other external support. The joint force needs to determine how best to employ unconventional warfare either as an independent force or in support of some other main effort and involve the whole of government approach in collaborative planning and mission execution.<sup>33</sup>

### **Foreign Internal Defense**

Foreign internal defense is defined as: “Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security.”<sup>34</sup>

Foreign internal defense (FID) is a form of nation assistance that includes civil or military assistance and is provided to and in coordination with a host nation, at the host nation’s request. Although most commonly associated with the conduct of

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<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-05, II-8.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, 23-24.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, 145.

counterinsurgency, FID efforts include the support of a host nation's internal defense and development strategies.<sup>35</sup> The framework of FID extends beyond just military engagement with the host nation and involves other instruments of nation power: diplomatic, informational, and economic; through which additional sources of national power such as financial, intelligence and law enforcement can be utilized to support the host nation.<sup>36</sup>

The Department of Defense (DoD) employs a number of FID tools:

- Security Cooperation is DoD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific US security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation.
- Indirect Support, employing security assistance (SA), military exchange programs, and joint and multinational exercises, focuses on building strong national infrastructures through economic and military capabilities that contribute to self-sufficiency.
- Direct Support (not involving combat operations) involves the use of US forces normally focused on civil-military operations (CMO) (primarily the provision of services to the local populace), psychological operations (PSYOP), communications and intelligence cooperation, mobility, and logistic support.
- US combat operations in support of FID operations, which requires a Presidential decision and serves only as a temporary solution until HN forces are able to stabilize the situation and provide security for the populace.<sup>37</sup>

FID is a long-term engagement effort with the Department of State as the lead agency in support of the host nation's internal defense and development plan, while the joint force focuses specifically on building security capability and capacity so that one

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<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, (Washington, DC: July 12, 2010), I-1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., I-5.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-22, x-xi.

day, the host nation's civilian authority is able to carry out these responsibilities autonomously.<sup>38</sup>

## Counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgency is defined as: "Comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances."<sup>39</sup> Insurgency is defined as: "The organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself."<sup>40</sup>

Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations are largely political and should be led by civilian authorities with unity of effort supporting the host nation with those efforts from the United States, partner nations and multinational agencies incorporating a wide range of activities to defeat insurgents and to address their core grievances. It is essential that the joint force have a comprehensive knowledge of the operational environment and success largely depends on gaining the support of the local population in order to reinforce the legitimacy of the host nation government, establish security, and to separate the insurgency from the population and its resources. Since insurgencies often flourish in "fragile states" including those states that have failed, are failing, or are in recovery, the desired end state for COIN operations is to establish effective and sustainable governance in the host nation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, 85.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, (Washington, DC: October 5, 2009), ix-xvi.

During initial COIN operations, establishing security in the host nation is essential in order for the other instruments of national power to be effective in confronting the political root causes of the insurgency. Thus, the U.S. military portion of the joint force, in conjunction with the host nation and civilian agencies, play an active, early and visible role. Since these efforts are often manpower and resource intensive and take years and often decades to be successful, they exceed the capacity of our special operations forces; thus, general purpose forces must be deployed in large numbers across a wide range of capabilities. The joint force must be prepared to endure such a long-term commitment.<sup>42</sup>

### **Stability Operations**

The term stability operations, a key element of irregular warfare, is defined as:

An overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.<sup>43</sup>

Stability operations (SO) are considered to be a Department of Defense core mission capability with equivalent proficiency to combat operations and are to be conducted throughout all the phases of conflict in a military campaign: shape, deter, seize the initiative, dominate, stabilize, and enable civil authority. Specific capabilities include: establishing civil security and civil control, restoring or providing essential services, repairing critical infrastructure, and providing humanitarian assistance.<sup>44</sup>

SO during the shape phase focuses on continued planning and preparations for SO which will occur in the subsequent phases, ensuring the interagency is included in a

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<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, 443.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Instruction 3000.05, *Stability Operations*, (Washington, DC: September 16, 2009), 2.

collaborative planning process. During deterrence, a partial list of SO considerations include: securing and limiting damage to key infrastructure, determining the availability of host nation law enforcement resources, and developing and promulgating strategic communication strategies to promote new governmental authority. During the seize the initiative phase, significant combat operations have begun. Barriers and obstructionists to the stabilize phase may be neutralized or eliminated. Key infrastructure continues to be protected. SO during the dominate phase is much less of a priority while major sustained combat operations are being conducted. However, SO may commence in rear areas or areas far away from the main effort. Once sustained combat operations start to conclude, the stabilize phase begins with military operations now coordinating with the interagency, multinational partners, international governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in support of host nation civil authorities. Finally, during the enable civil authority phase, peace building begins; those SO which strengthens, provides reconstruction to civil infrastructure and other confidence building measures to prevent the host nation from returning to conflict. The joint force will then transfer lead SO responsibility to the Department of State or U.S. Agency for International Development or to an international authority.<sup>45</sup>

Irregular warfare is diverse and includes a range of mission-sets across the range of military operations. These operations extend from military engagement, security cooperation and deterrence to crisis response and limited contingency operations, and if

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<sup>45</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, Incorporating Change 2, (Washington, DC: March 22, 2010), V-4-V-28.

necessary, major operations and campaigns.<sup>46</sup> These broad ranges of missions across the range of military operations pose a series of threats and challenges to the joint force.

Coupled with an understanding of what comprises irregular warfare, it becomes possible to examine the challenges that evolve in these irregular warfare areas.

### **Challenges to the Joint Force**

As previously noted, the operating environment of the twenty-first century is more complex than ever with irregular adversaries becoming more adaptive and posing a multidimensional threat requiring more than just conventional military solutions. Within the irregular warfare environment, irregular threats present the following challenges for the joint force:

- The complex political, cultural, religious, and historical factors and diverse populations involved in each conflict are difficult to understand in sufficient depth.
- The non-military nature of many aspects of the conflict fall outside the sole competence of the joint force.
- Many irregular threats are proficient in waging the battle of the narrative.
- The protracted nature of the conflict tests U.S. staying power; adversaries aim to survive and outlast rather than defeat the joint force outright.
- The host-nation government or local partner often possess limited ability to meet their populations' security, governance, and economic needs, and otherwise address causes of conflict, which in turn affects political legitimacy.
- Non-state actors leverage cyberspace as an operational safe haven and as a means to attack.
- The application of military force, while often necessary, can be used by adversaries to rally opposition, and excessive use of force can outweigh any gains derived from military power.
- Irregular threats operate as networks with regional and global linkages that enable more rapid, sustained and stealthy action, and transcend governments' institutional boundaries.

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, Revision Final Coordination, (Washington, DC: October 7, 2010), V-2.

- The varied and decentralized nature and organizational structure of irregular threats demand versatile and agile joint forces and organizations that are able to adapt to the complexity of the threat.<sup>47</sup>

### **Joint Force Approach**

Admiral Mullen offers a partial set of broad solutions to being able to confront these challenges posed by irregular threats:

- Build a balanced and versatile joint force.
- Improve knowledge of and capabilities for waging irregular warfare.
- Improve knowledge and capabilities for security, engagement, and relief and reconstruction activities.
- Create agile general purpose forces capable of operating independently at increasingly lower echelons.
- Improve the ability to operate in urban environments.
- Improve capabilities and capacities for covert and clandestine operations.
- Markedly increase language and cultural capabilities and capacities.
- Institute mechanisms to prepare general purpose forces quickly for mission changes.
- Markedly improve the ability to integrate with other U.S. agencies and other partners.
- Develop innovative and adaptive leaders down to the lowest levels.
- Develop senior leaders who are experts in commanding at the operational level.
- Develop senior leaders who are experts not only in operational art, but also in the development and execution of national strategy.
- Improve service and institutional adaptability to deal with rapid change.<sup>48</sup>

These solutions have been shown to be part of an ends-ways-means approach for how the joint force will confront irregular threats: “The ends are to prevent, deter, disrupt, or defeat irregular threats. Prevention is a primary focus of effort, since it is preferable to deal with incipient threats and the conditions that give rise to them.”<sup>49</sup> The ways are the five activities or operations of irregular warfare: counterterrorism,

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<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, 28-35.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, 16.

unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency and stability operations. The means is the collaborative arrangement, consisting of the joint force, the interagency, multinational partners, the host nation, international government organizations and non-governmental agencies, working along a unit of effort to combat the irregular threat.<sup>50</sup>

Irregular warfare concepts and priorities within the U.S. military have enjoyed episodic favor throughout our country's history although our leaders have argued that being able to "fight" irregular warfare should be a mainstay military capability. Certainly, U.S. military engagements since September 11<sup>th</sup> have been irregular in nature confronting non-state actors in a complex and dangerous operational environment. However, combining the five pillars (primary activities) under the term of irregular warfare suggests a brand of warfare, intended to influence a relevant population, which includes non-kinetic, non-violent activities. Thus, debate continues within the Department of Defense on the use of the term "irregular warfare" since elements of irregular warfare, as previously discussed, often utilize non-combat competencies of the armed forces in support of the interagency, civilian non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations; many of these very same organizations that "do not do warfare." Some allies and partners view irregular warfare are illegal and immoral. Including "Countering Irregular Threats" in the naming of *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0* was a compromise to "soften" potential visceral reactions by the standalone term "irregular warfare."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, even the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, in his own capstone

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<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Fawcett, e-mail message to author, March 6, 2011.

publication, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, seems to apologize for the use of the term “irregular:”

It is recognized that the symmetry between the naming conventions of ‘traditional’ and ‘irregular’ warfare is not ideal. Several symmetrical pair sets ‘Regular/Irregular,’ ‘Traditional/Nontraditional (or Untraditional),’ and ‘Conventional /Unconventional’ were considered and discarded. Generating friction in the first two instances was the fact that as most US operations since 9-11 have been ‘Irregular’ there was the problem of calling ‘irregular or non-traditional’ what we do routinely. In the last instance, ‘conventional/unconventional’ had previous connotation and wide usage that could not be practically overcome.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the evolving definitions, the grouping of concepts and the semantic problems associated with irregular warfare within the Department of Defense, it seems to be the only viable alternative naming convention to more traditional warfare. Irregular warfare incorporates a unique range of mission-sets by including vital operations and activities that are generally not considered traditional or conventional. Irregular warfare describes and defines activities, both friendly and adversarial, that help the joint force plan and prepare for modern conflict. The joint force must thoroughly understand the drivers of conflict and the operational environment in-depth, conduct the five activities or operations of irregular warfare, either in sequence, in parallel or in a blended form, and establish processes to continually assess and adapt its approach to confronting the complex nature of irregular threats. How each specific service sees its approach to irregular warfare and views irregular challenges is discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Revision First Draft, (Washington, DC: December 14, 2010), 7.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **MILITARY SERVICES' APPROACHES TO IRREGULAR WARFARE**

In addition to establishing Department of Defense policy for the conduct of irregular warfare, Department of Defense Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)*, provides direction and assigns responsibilities to the service secretaries to organize, train and equip expeditionary units in order to meet Combatant Commander irregular warfare requirements, on a scale comparable to carrying out their traditional service warfare missions, with equal proficiency, across the full range of military operations.<sup>1</sup> Each of the services has mapped out a specific path and service-focused method to conduct irregular warfare, and each of these specific service approaches and views are summarized in the following section. These influence the Navy's definition and approach.

#### **U.S. Air Force**

At its fundamental core, the U.S. Air Force views itself generally as an effects based operations focused organization in that all operational capabilities and each tactical action should be tied to achieving specific effects to produce desired end states, which are comprehensively linked to U.S national security objectives. The Air Force defines seventeen key operational functions, known as the air and space power functions: strategic attack, counterair, counterspace, counterland, countersea, information operations, combat support, command and control, airlift, air refueling, spacelift, special

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)*, (Washington, DC: December 1, 2008), 8.

operations, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, combat search and rescue, navigation and positioning, and weather services.<sup>2</sup>

Encompassing these seventeen functions; the Air Force has developed a useful visual model on how it views irregular warfare into key activities and capabilities, as shown in figure 1.<sup>3</sup>

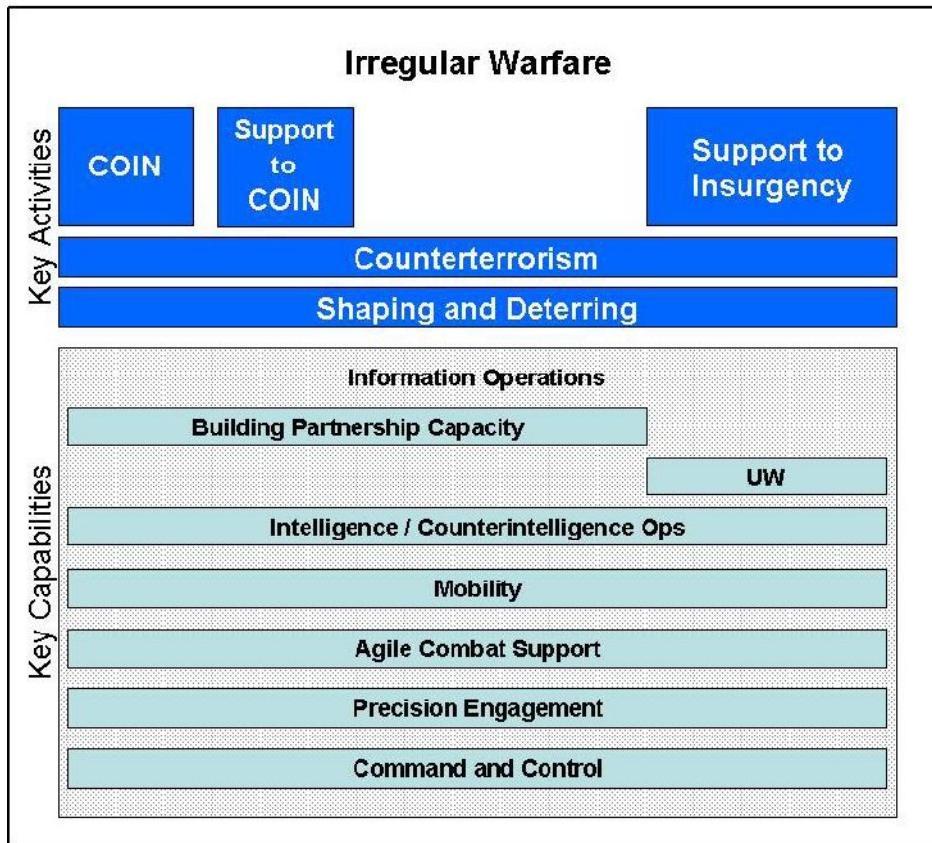


Figure 1. Air Force irregular warfare model.

From the entire range of irregular warfare activities facing the joint forces, the Air Force has narrowed its focus to those key military specific activities which include: counterinsurgency (COIN), support to COIN, support to insurgency, counterterrorism,

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, (Washington, DC: November 17, 2003), 38-58.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, *Irregular Warfare*, (Washington, DC: August 1, 2007), 5.

and shaping and deterring. COIN includes Air Force actual participation to defeat an insurgency. Support to COIN is defined as providing support to a government in defeating an insurgency and can include direct support (not involving combat), direct support (involving combat) and indirect support. Support to insurgency refers to the support of a “legitimate” insurgency, such as one recognized by the international community. Counterterrorism and shaping and deterring may be continuous throughout the range of military operations, or may be in conjunction with or independent of COIN, support to COIN and support to insurgency.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Air Force has significant mission capabilities throughout its three domains: air, space and cyberspace; the following is a discussion of how the Air Force can employ its traditional capabilities in support of its irregular warfare model.

Information operations (IO). The Air Force views IO as influence operations; to shape the operational environment, the relevant population, the actors involved, and other external parties. Several activities make up IO which include: network warfare operations which are offensive, defensive or supporting, conducted in cyberspace to affect information networks; electronic warfare operations which use electromagnetic energy to affect an adversary’s communications nodes; psychological operations which seek to influence the adversary’s behaviors favorable to United States national and military objectives; military deception operations which misleads an adversary to cause a certain action; counterpropaganda operations which uses offensive means to deliver hostile foreign messages and themes; public affairs operations which are used to shape the

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, 5-6.

international community through proactive engagement; and, operational security operations which are used to protect friendly forces and information.<sup>5</sup>

Building partnership capability (BPC). BPC emphasizes the collaborative, joint, multinational and interagency approach in building host nation capabilities for addressing its complex internal security challenges and preventing these threats from becoming global in nature and negatively affecting U.S. security interests. Examples of BPC include: security assistance, foreign military sales and foreign internal defense. In the Air Force, as in other services, general purpose forces may assess, train, advise and assist in military-to-military engagements to improve the host nation's airpower capabilities.<sup>6</sup>

Intelligence/counterintelligence operations. To effectively conduct irregular warfare, it is necessary to utilize the domains of air, space and cyberspace to prepare and understand the joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment as well as the cultural factors involved in the conflict. Accurate and timely information, along with subsequent analysis and understanding, are required not only to achieve success in direct combat operations such as weapons targeting, but for indirect or non-kinetic operations as well, since both can be used to achieve the desired effects. Commanders rely on intelligence to select the best courses of action to defeat insurgents. To support effective and innovative decision making, the Air Force actively promotes "different" and "creative" thinking in the gathering and analysis of intelligence with respect to social structures and cultures, and to expand all source intelligence collection methods to

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, 36-39.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 27-30.

include non-traditional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets, such as fighter aircraft equipped with sensors.<sup>7</sup>

Mobility. Air mobility is a unique Air Force capability which can provide support to U.S. ground forces and host nation capabilities in dangerous and remote locations at minimal risk. Three activities make up air mobility which include: combat deployment using fixed-wing transports and vertical-lift platforms for the insertion of ground assault forces and casualty evacuation; combat sustainment to resupply units engaged in irregular warfare using both air landing and airdrop delivery methods; and integrating mobility and special operations which includes providing specific and unique Air Force airlift forces in support of special operations forces.<sup>8</sup>

Agile combat support (ACS) is the complete front-end to back-end logistics transport capability in support of the joint force commander's operational plan. However, an irregular warfare operational environment presents complex and uncertain challenges to ACS which include: austere environments, extended logistical lines and multiple distributed operations. ACS planners need to develop the capabilities to adapt and to develop new capabilities or modify existing capabilities and processes in order to meet the joint force irregular warfare requirements.<sup>9</sup>

Precision engagement, as it relates to conducting irregular warfare, refers to the entire range of Air Force capabilities, often using the same systems and capabilities utilized in traditional warfare in order to achieve desired effects and end states. These

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, 30-33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

include not only lethal capabilities but non-kinetic capabilities such as cyberspace and information operations.<sup>10</sup>

The Air Force recognizes the critical essence of speed in gathering, analyzing and acting on intelligence in conducting irregular warfare. The command and control (C2) structure, whether highly sophisticated and robust, or very informal will depend on the nature of the operational environment and the requirements and capabilities of the host nation.<sup>11</sup>

Army special operations forces generally are the lead military capability in providing support to insurgent ground forces. Air Force capabilities aforementioned will provide a supporting role to unconventional warfare forces as well as to Air Force special operations forces that will serve in a more direct-action role and see more involvement.<sup>12</sup>

The Air Force has recognized that the conduct of irregular warfare is sufficiently distinct and different from traditional warfare in that it has a specific irregular warfare doctrine document for its service. In fact, the Air Force is the only service component to publish such a comprehensive and specific irregular warfare publication. Because irregular warfare is often thought of from the perspective of “boots on the ground” and that the Air Force domains of air, space and cyberspace tend to be less intrusive when attempting to influence the relevant population in the “war of ideas,” a basic tenet of irregular warfare operations, the Air Force has summarized its conceptual approach to irregular warfare (IW) in its eight “IW ‘Truths’ For Airman:”

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, 44-45.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 19.

- The Air Force must be prepared to simultaneously conduct irregular and traditional warfare operations.
- IW is a different form of warfare and not a lesser form of conflict within traditional warfare. The struggle for legitimacy and influence over a relevant population is the primary focus of operations, not the coercion of key political leaders or defeat of their military capability.
- IW is intelligence-intensive.
- Unity of effort across all instruments of power is essential to overall strategic success.
- Integrated C2 structures enable flexibility at all levels and are vital to successful counterinsurgency operations.
- Effective working relationships between people and organizations are key to success in IW.
- Operational effectiveness can be very difficult to measure; thus, feedback through a strong operations assessment and lessons learned process is essential to strategic success.
- The adversary may be highly complex and adaptive.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, since counterinsurgency is such a major focus of Air Force irregular warfare activities, this can be summarized through its five “COIN ‘Truths’ For Airman:”

- Legitimacy and influence are the main objectives.
- The Air Force provides critical capabilities that enable joint force operations in COIN.
- Military actions are a necessary part of any COIN strategy; military actions that affect the adversary’s will or capability must be integrated with the JFC’s objective to influence the populace.
- A key adversary strength is the ability to hide within the populace—countering many key advantages of traditional military power.
- COIN is a protracted affair.<sup>14</sup>

The Air Force contains numerous and unique capabilities for carrying out irregular warfare; a type of warfare not mutually exclusive from traditional warfare. Both forms of warfare may be present in any conflict and the Air Force is capable for simultaneous conduct of irregular and traditional warfare. The Air Force employs traditional capabilities throughout its three domains of air, space and cyberspace to

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, 8-10

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

counter irregular threats using both direct and indirect methods in support of the Combatant Commander.

### **U.S. Army**

The U.S. Army, the service component with the largest doctrinal library amongst all the service components, does not have a specific Field Manual entitled “Irregular Warfare.” Curiously enough, the term is not present at all in the 2005 version of Field Manual 1, the Army’s foremost doctrinal publication.<sup>15</sup> However, the word “irregular” is mentioned nine times in general terms throughout the manual’s seventy-five pages discussing: the nature of irregular threats and challenges, the necessity for the Army to develop capabilities to confront irregular threats on par with its traditional warfare capabilities, and the ability to transition back and forth through a broadening and more versatile general purpose force; all themes we’ve seen before in higher level national and Department of Defense (DoD) strategy documents such as the “National Security Strategy,” *Quadrennial Defense Review Report, Capstone Concept for Joint Operations* and DoD Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)*.

Over the last ten years, the Army’s “Campaign of Learning”<sup>16</sup> has significantly resulted in the evolution of its operational doctrine. In fact, the June 2001 edition of Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (319 pages),<sup>17</sup> did not even contain the term “irregular warfare.” In the February 2008 edition of Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, the term formally entered

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 1, *The Army*, (Washington, DC: June 14, 2005), iii.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 C1, *Operations*, (Washington, DC: February 22, 2011), Foreword.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, (Washington, DC: June 14, 2001).

the Army lexicon as a “New Army term”<sup>18</sup> and with an Army specific definition, purposely different (slightly) from the joint force definition: “(Army) A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over a population.”<sup>19</sup> It is unknown why this Army specific definition omits the remainder of the definition as found in Joint Publication 1-02: “Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.”<sup>20</sup>

The Army views irregular warfare as different and distinct from conventional warfare. Irregular warfare is waged among and within the population by actors seeking political power, not necessarily military supremacy. Unlike conventional warfare, irregular warfare emphasizes indirect approaches and unconventional means while avoiding direct military confrontation. The generally weaker adversary seeks to defeat the stronger one through persistent pressure and steady attrition to create instability and to lessen the credibility of civil authorities to govern and provide security.<sup>21</sup>

The Army considers the following five joint operations under the grouping of irregular warfare: foreign internal defense, combating terrorism, unconventional warfare, support to insurgency, and counterinsurgency; and that special operations forces (SOF) have the primary responsibility for most irregular warfare operations.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, (Washington, DC: February 27, 2008), D-5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Glossary-8.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, As Amended Through January 31, 2011, (Washington, DC: November 8, 2010), 189.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 C1, 2-9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Foreign internal defense (FID). “Foreign internal defense is the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security.”<sup>23</sup> The two categories of FID operations include: indirect support which emphasizes host nation self-sufficiency; and direct support in which U.S. forces provide direct support to a host nation’s population or military forces. Army SOF will conduct the FID mission of advising host nation forces and will generally refrain from combat operations.<sup>24</sup>

Combating terrorism (CT). “Combating terrorism is actions, including antiterrorism and counterterrorism, taken to oppose terrorism through the entire threat spectrum.”<sup>25</sup> Antiterrorism are force protection measures to reduce vulnerabilities to personnel and property and are conducted by all forces, SOF and general purpose forces, during all operations. CT operations are considered to be SOF specific operations to attack terrorist networks and to directly alter the operational environment such that it no longer provides a safe haven to support terrorist activity.<sup>26</sup>

Unconventional warfare (UW). “Unconventional warfare is a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted through, with, or by indigenous or surrogate forces that are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source.”<sup>27</sup> UW operations are

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 C1, 2-9.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 C1, 2-9-2-10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 2-10.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2-11.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2-12.

considered to be highly specialized SOF missions although conventional Army forces may play a supporting role.

Support to insurgency. Army SOF provides the primary land forces to support an insurgency against a regime which threatens U.S. national security interests. Support to insurgency operations are considered to be highly specialized SOF missions although conventional Army forces may play a supporting role.<sup>28</sup>

Counterinsurgency (COIN). “Counterinsurgency consists of comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.”<sup>29</sup> Although insurgency, counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare are viewed within the Army’s broad spectrum of conflict known as irregular warfare, COIN has taken on a greater prominence within Army has a whole. Since the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army views its conventional general purpose forces as having the lead responsibility for COIN operations. Of the three primary roles for U.S. land forces, the Army Secretary and Chief of Staff stated in the *2010 Army Posture Statement* that: “First, the Army must prevail in protracted counter-insurgency (COIN) operations.”<sup>30</sup>

This mindset contributed to the effort led by General David Petraeus to completely rewrite Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*; a combined Army-Marine Corps field manual, dedicated exclusively to COIN operations. This field manual, twenty plus years in the making, is an attempt to compile traditional approaches to COIN dating back through Vietnam and World War II with contemporary lessons learned from recent

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<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 C1, 2-10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *2010 Army Posture Statement*, (Washington, DC: February 2010), 3.

conflicts and shaped by today’s “new normal,” a challenging and complex operational environment wherein inferior adversaries readily engage more capable and larger conventional forces using irregular means to achieve political success.<sup>31</sup>

Since the end of the Cold War, Army force structure has generally been in steady decline. Over the last several years, as the Army has transformed its forces to more modular, deployable and tailored to the specific needs of the Combatant Commander, the Army has also shifted most COIN operations to occur at the small unit level. Since the heart of COIN operations is to gain the support of the local population, the Army believes small units are more effective than larger units since they can get closer to the people and are better able to respond to a changing dynamic operational environment.

Change 1 to Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, is essentially the culmination of learning over the past nine years of continuous conflict. It is not meant to highlight the latest “trends” in modern day warfare but to encapsulate a complete understanding of full spectrum operations. It is no longer a question of whether the Army will prepare for irregular warfare or major combat operations; rather, the Army must be trained and capable to confront the threats of today’s complex and uncertain operational environment, throughout the entire spectrum of conflict consisting of offensive, defensive, stability and civil support operations.<sup>32</sup> Irregular warfare and addressing irregular challenges is fundamental to all Army forces. It appears the Army has embraced this concept.

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<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, (Washington, DC: December 15, 2006), vii.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 C1, 1-20.

## **U.S. Marine Corps**

The roots for the U.S. Marine Corps approach to irregular warfare can be found in the *Small Wars Manual*, originally printed in 1940 and re-released in 1990.<sup>33</sup> Although considered a historical work, it is regarded as a premier reference source on peacekeeping and counterinsurgency operations, and is relevant even to today.

As applied to the United States, small wars are operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation.<sup>34</sup>

Although predating World War II, and written in the context of conducting “Monroe Doctrine-like” small wars such as skirmishes with Mexico and in small Caribbean nations, the *Small Wars Manual* remains quite contemporary emphasizing the linkage of military strategy with political strategy, preventing war through whole-of-government approaches, the unique Navy-Marine Corps team, the importance of the civil-military relationship during military operations in support of civil authorities, small unit operations, psychological approaches in securing the local population, and conveying an understanding of the complex challenges of an operational environment posed by irregular adversaries who will act unconstrained by the norms of conventional combat.<sup>35</sup>

As one of the sea services, along with the Navy and Coast Guard, the Marine Corps receives its current and overarching guidance from the first-ever unified maritime strategy document, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*. The Marine Corps

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<sup>33</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, (Washington, DC: 1940), Foreword.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

will integrate its capabilities with the sea services throughout the global maritime domain with increased emphasis on counterterrorism and irregular warfare.<sup>36</sup>

With the release of the *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept Version 1.0*,<sup>37</sup> in 2007, the Marine Corps established the Center for Irregular Warfare (CIW), co-located with Headquarters, United States Marine Corps Training and Education Command at Quantico, VA. The Marine Corps recognized that contemporary operations since the end of the Cold War “have demonstrated that general purpose forces must be adept applying the widest spectrum of military capabilities, across the continuum of warfare and in all phases of a campaign, against irregular threats in order to defeat foes that use non-traditional methods against us.”<sup>38</sup> The CIW, comprised of experts in counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, counterterrorism, unconventional warfare stability operations and other irregular warfare subjects, is to serve as a “center of excellence” for developing, coordinating, implementing and enhancing Marine Corps irregular warfare capabilities and capacities across the spectrum of operations and irregular threats.<sup>39</sup>

The Marine Corps prides itself on being the “Nation’s naval expeditionary, combined-arms force-in-readiness.”<sup>40</sup> However, the current pace of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq has forced the Marine Corps to serve essentially as a second land army which has resulted in a state of degraded readiness for its designed expeditionary

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<sup>36</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, (Washington, DC: October 2007), 10.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC) Version 1.0*, (Washington, DC: September 11, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration, *Charter for the USMC Center For Irregular Warfare (CIW)*, (Quantico, VA: May 11, 2007), 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *2010 Posture of the United States Marine Corps*, (Washington, DC: February 25, 2010), 2.

missions. While in the process of resetting service readiness, the Marine Corps also realizes it must have balanced capabilities for irregular warfare in addition to those required for conventional conflict. It also recognizes that the demands on the Marine Corps for irregular warfare related capabilities will continue to grow over the next two decades.<sup>41</sup>

To meet these challenges, the Commandant has established four priorities consisting of twenty-eight tasks. Specifically addressing irregular warfare, the Marine Corps will better resource and consolidate training activities to eliminate redundancies and improve synergies, strengthen relationships between Marine Corps general purpose operations forces with special operations forces to capitalize on unique training opportunities, and re-organize, consolidate and strengthen irregular warfare organizations.<sup>42</sup>

The Commandant also likens the essence of the Marine Corps as a “‘two-fisted fighter’ – capable of offering an open hand to people in need or a precise jab to an adversary in an irregular warfare environment.”<sup>43</sup> With the desire for increased counterinsurgency capacity, the December 2006 release of Army Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, the Marine Corps and the Army have synchronized their approaches with joint doctrine that formally institutionalizes counterinsurgency operations between the two services.<sup>44</sup> The previous discussion on the Army approach to counterinsurgency applies to the Marine Corps as well.

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Commandant’s Planning Guidance*, (Washington, DC: 2010), 8.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Vision & Strategy 2025*, (Washington, DC: Marine Corps, July 2008), 6.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-24, vii.

At the heart of the Marine Corps ethos is that every Marine is a rifleman and is imbued with core values such as offensive spirit, tactical and technical proficiency, and esprit de corps. These characteristics contribute to a self-sufficient, expeditionary force, which excels in maneuver warfare, from the sea and on the ground, in ever changing and challenging operational environments, including irregular warfare.<sup>45</sup> Irregular warfare and countering irregular warfare elements are central to Marine Corps organization and missions.

### **U.S. Coast Guard**

In 1790, the first Congress established the U.S. Coast Guard, originally named the Revenue Marine, for the purpose of collecting customs duties. Over the next two hundred plus years, the Coast Guard has evolved into a multi-mission maritime service with the following three broad roles containing eleven mission areas, as shown in figure 2:<sup>46</sup>

- Maritime Safety: Search and Rescue and Marine Safety.
- Maritime Security: Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security, Drug Interdiction, Migrant Interdiction and Defense Readiness.
- Maritime Stewardship: Ice Operations, Aids to Navigation, Marine Environmental Protection, Living Marine Resources and Other Law Enforcement activities.

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<sup>45</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*, (Washington, DC: Marine Corps, September 27, 2001), 1-23-1-24.

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Coast Guard, Coast Guard Publication 1, *U.S. Coast Guard: America's Maritime Guardian*, (Washington, DC: Coast Guard, May 2009), 4.



Figure 2. Protecting U.S. maritime interests through multi-mission integration.

Although the Coast Guard was transferred to the Department of Homeland Security under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, its roles and missions did not change. Along with the Navy and Marine Corps, the Coast Guard is considered a key partner of the United States' sea services in executing our maritime strategy. In addition to a heightened focus on maritime homeland security, the Coast Guard's roles and missions, in conjunction with the Navy, support the maritime strategy through forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster response capabilities.<sup>47</sup>

However, one problem area associated with the term “irregular warfare” is that the word “warfare” elicits a connotation that some allies, the interagency and multi-national partners might not be comfortable with. Irregular warfare concepts or definitions are not found in Coast Guard doctrine or strategy publications, and the term “warfare” is

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<sup>47</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy*, 12-14.

rarely used. The Coast Guard “straddles the fence” in its ability to function as a multi-faceted organization consisting of military, law enforcement and interagency roles and responsibilities; while normally operating under the Department of Homeland Security, not the Department of Defense. Therefore, the Coast Guard is generally considered more as a humanitarian assistance and law enforcement organization than as a “warfare” organization, although it is indeed a military service and may conduct or support naval warfare missions when transferred to the authority of the Navy during time of war or as the President directs.

The Coast Guard does not think in terms of threats and challenges it faces throughout the maritime domain as being irregular in nature as no distinction is specifically made. However, in the context of irregular warfare and irregular threats, as previously defined, the Coast Guard plays a key role in carrying out “irregular warfare-like” missions.

The emergence of transnational threats including: non-state actors, criminals, piracy, terrorists, illegal migration, environmental exploitation and degradation, disease and the potential impacts of weapons of mass destruction proliferation; challenge the security and economic interests of the United States. The lines between criminal activity and terrorism are blurred. The vastness of the maritime domain, especially in areas of limited, poor, or failing governance, makes for safe havens and transportation routes for these activities to occur.<sup>48</sup> The Coast Guard entirely understands these threats and is fully engaged in defending our homeland, both along our shores and when forward-deployed. Through maritime domain awareness with the Navy and other armed forces, the

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *The U.S. Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security and Stewardship*, (Washington, DC: January 19, 2007), 17-26.

interagency, and allied and partner nations, the Coast Guard leverages its unique operational capabilities in combating transnational threats.

The Coast Guard motto, “Semper Paratus”, meaning “Always Ready”, embodies the true character of a military, multi-mission, and maritime service that is indeed “a jack of all trades.” The Coast Guard ethos is that every service member is a guardian and ready to protect the nation and to carry out the myriad of missions to include irregular warfare-type missions.

### **U.S. Navy**

The official web site of the U.S. Navy states: “The mission of the Navy is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas.”<sup>49</sup> However, in its doctrinal publications and strategic documents, the Navy struggles to define itself in terms of a mission statement. Rather, terms such as “core capabilities” and “strategic imperatives” are used to describe what the Navy ought to do and how it plans to do it. Navy core capabilities include: forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance/disaster response.<sup>50</sup> A maritime strategy consists of the following strategic imperatives: limit regional conflict with forward-deployed decisive naval power, deter major-power war, win our nation’s wars, contribute to homeland defense in-depth, foster and sustain cooperative relationships with international partners, and prevent or contain local disruptions before they impact the global system.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, “Navy Organization,” U.S. Department of the Navy, <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/organization/org-top.asp> (accessed April 10, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, Naval Doctrine Publication 1, *Naval Warfare*, (Washington, DC: March 2010), 31-40.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 25-29.

It is the author's contention that irregular warfare is not a U.S. Navy core mission area. Although, the Navy Warfare Library does not contain a publication entitled "Irregular Warfare," several publications do exist on such irregular warfare *supporting* activities such as: expeditionary warfare, riverine operations, special warfare and counter proliferation. Thus, it appears that the U.S. Navy does not conduct irregular warfare; rather, it supports irregular warfare through an ad hoc collection of capabilities, many of which have existed for years.

Since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Navy has recognized the emergence of non-state irregular actors and their impact on a global security environment which has now evolved to one that is more complex, unpredictable and dangerous. To meet the needs of the Combatant Commanders in combating these irregular threats, in January 2006, the Navy centralized the management of its irregular warfare capabilities with the creation of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC). NECC is a global force provider of the Navy's expeditionary capabilities with the following mission statement:

Organize, man, equip, and train NECC forces to execute combat, combat support and combat service support missions across the spectrum of joint, combined, and multinational operations in the near-coast, inshore, and riparian environments to include irregular warfare and other shaping missions that secure strategic access and global freedom of action.<sup>52</sup>

NECC force capabilities include: riverine, naval construction (seabees), explosive ordnance disposal, maritime expeditionary security, expeditionary intelligence,

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<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Navy Expeditionary Combat Enterprise Strategic Plan 2010*, (Virginia Beach, VA: 2010), 7.

expeditionary logistics, maritime civil affairs, security force assistance, expeditionary combat camera, and expeditionary combat readiness.<sup>53</sup>

In July 2008, the Navy formally created the Navy Irregular Warfare Office (NIWO) to “institutionalize current ad hoc efforts in irregular warfare missions of counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) and the supporting missions of information operations, intelligence operations, foreign internal defense, and unconventional warfare as they apply to CT and COIN.”<sup>54</sup> The three elements of the NIWO mission include:

- Synchronizing Navy capabilities with USSOCOM and other combatant commanders and interagency and international partners to support IW needs.
- Facilitate the rapid identification, development, and deployment of Navy IW capabilities.
- Institutionalize the Navy’s planning, investment and capability development.<sup>55</sup>

In summary, NIWO is the Navy’s response for “coordinating,” “facilitating,” “organizing” and “synchronizing” short and long-term irregular warfare capabilities and requirements in support of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the Combatant Commanders. The Navy does not conduct irregular warfare; it provides support to those that do.

In January 2010, the Navy released a vision statement for confronting irregular challenges.<sup>56</sup> Sometimes this has been misunderstood as being the U.S. Navy irregular warfare vision statement. However, confronting irregular challenges and conducting

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<sup>53</sup> Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, “NECC Force Capabilities,” U.S. Department of the Navy, <http://www.necc.navy.mil> (accessed November 11, 2010).

<sup>54</sup> Message, 311621Z JUL 08, U.S. Navy, NAVADMIN, “Establishment of the Navy Irregular Warfare Office, (Washington, DC: July 31, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *The U.S. Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges*, (Washington, DC, January 2010).

irregular warfare are very different concepts and require different capabilities, at least from the Navy's perspective. The terms "irregular challenges" and "confronting irregular challenges", neither of which has been formally adopted by any other service or defined in joint doctrine, will be discussed in the next two chapters.

## **Summary**

Although it is Department of Defense (DoD) policy to conduct irregular warfare, this requirement, by DoD instruction, technically only applies to the military services of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps; excluding the Coast Guard.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, irregular warfare is considered to be one of the six core mission areas for the joint force.<sup>58</sup>

It has been demonstrated that the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps have embraced joint irregular warfare concepts and missions into service specific irregular warfare mission areas. The Navy, on the other hand, does not similarly view irregular warfare as a core mission area. Rather, it *supports* irregular warfare activities through the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, the Navy's provider of service specific irregular warfare capabilities to the joint force. Special operations forces can be embarked on Navy ships and submarines for the conduct of irregular warfare missions; however, the Navy still views itself in a supporting role to U.S. Special Operations Command and the Combatant Commander.

In many respects, the core mission areas of irregular warfare are carried out by U.S. armed forces using conventional military capabilities against military or

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<sup>57</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare (IW)*, 1-2.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Mission Review Report*, (Washington, DC: January 2009), 5.

paramilitary-style adversaries. However, irregular threats sometimes extend beyond armed insurgents and may include criminals, violent extremists, and other non-state actors. These can present irregular threats to regional and global security where readily conventional military solutions may not be apparent or appropriate. U.S. policy makers and military officials desire whole-of-government solutions to integrate non-military agencies and organizations to deter and defeat these irregular threats without having to first resort to the application of military force by the DoD through the service capabilities. Therefore, they must clearly understand the irregular challenges that threaten global security in order to develop effective policy and strategies to confront irregular threats. While the services have defined irregular warfare in their own terms, a common definition of irregular challenges is more elusive. The concept of irregular challenges is discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **WHAT ARE IRREGULAR CHALLENGES?**

The 2005 *National Defense Strategy* (NDS) introduced a new term into our national security lexicon: “irregular challenges.”<sup>1</sup> When introducing the new security threats of the twenty-first century facing the United States, the NDS discusses a transformational shift from powerful aggressor nations of the twentieth century to those new threats occurring in and emanating from weaker states and ungoverned areas.<sup>2</sup> Non-state actors and other violent extremists, taking refuge and building terrorist networks in this new geo-political environment, now have the potential to create catastrophic effects using asymmetric means, against nations with much larger and powerful conventional military forces.<sup>3</sup> It is imperative to understand this term, the new threats themselves, and what this means to the Navy in confronting irregular challenges.

As alluded to previously, the U.S. military primarily prefers to wage what most consider traditional forms of warfare.<sup>4</sup> Because of our superior conventional combat capabilities, our adversaries tend to avoid traditional combat engagements in favor of other non-traditional means, methods and capabilities which include: irregular, catastrophic and disruptive. Informed by the NDS, the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* acknowledged that our future adversaries, such as non-state actors, will most likely confront the United States, by choosing these non-traditional means and methods

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy Of The United States Of America*, (Washington, DC, March 2005), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, (Washington, DC: January 15, 2009), 30.

of warfare. As shown in figure 3, the U.S. military will need to adapt and develop new capabilities to address a broader range of military operations.<sup>5</sup>

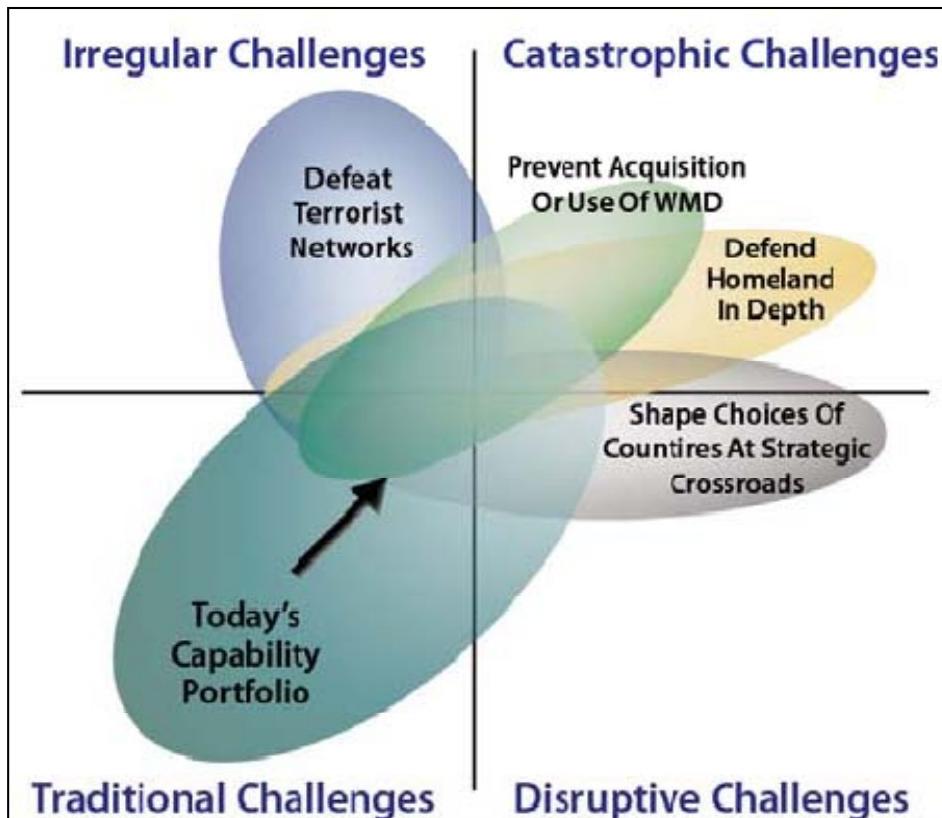


Figure 3. Department of Defense portfolio of capabilities versus challenges.

The following working definitions<sup>6</sup> are used within this study to describe the approach that adversaries can take to threaten U.S. national security interests:

- Traditional challenges are posed by states employing recognized military capabilities and forces in well-understood forms of military competition and conflict.
- Irregular challenges come from those employing “unconventional” methods to counter *traditional* advantages of stronger opponents.
- Catastrophic challenges involve the acquisition, possession and use of WMD or methods producing WMD-like effects.
- Disruptive challenges may come from adversaries who develop and use break-through technologies to negate current U.S. advantages in key operational domains.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, DC: February 6, 2006), 19.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy 2005*, 2-3.

Although the categories may overlap and adversaries may be proficient in more than one of these methods and capabilities, this paper focuses on concepts associated with irregular challenges. The others are included above for historical context and perspective.

### **Definition**

Irregular challenges are thus, ever increasingly non-traditional (or irregular), means, methods and capabilities used by adversaries to challenge U.S. national security interests. Examples may include: criminal activity, terrorism, and insurgency; with the objective of destabilizing countries or regions for political or other purpose. Adversaries often take a long-term approach by attempting to create prohibitive situational and political conditions with the desire to cause the United States to alter a particular strategy or course of action, or to reduce and perhaps eliminate United States influence in a country or region.<sup>7</sup>

Irregular challenges are not new. Throughout our history, U.S. armed forces have faced these before, and generally speaking, the military response has been reactive and episodic. At the level of national survival, irregular challenges may not be the greatest threat to the United States, but they could become the most likely threat we will face in the foreseeable future. Over the last twenty years or so, we have seen the emergence of violent extremist organizations and their ideologies and the impact of failed governance. Ungoverned space or the lack of effective governance in a country or region has provided a safe haven for these criminals, terrorists and insurgents to set up a base of operation, to operate without impunity and flourish, and to extend their influence both regionally and throughout the world through direct and associated networks. Failed nation states, either

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy 2005*, 3.

incapable or unwilling of exercising firm governance throughout their country are complicit with the goals and objectives of the violent extremist organizations. These are some of the irregular challenges our nation is currently facing and will continue to face.

### **Irregular Challenges Versus Irregular Warfare**

In January 2010, the Chief of Naval Operations released a key document describing how the U.S. Navy will confront irregular challenges in cooperation with the joint force, interagency and coalition partners.<sup>8</sup> How the Navy understands its role and required capabilities in confronting irregular challenges and the wide variety of missions and actions it will undertake will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. But it is important to understand there is a distinction in the concepts between irregular warfare and how the Navy interprets the meaning of irregular challenges.

The terms “irregular warfare” and “irregular challenges” are not synonymous. Thus, it is essential to note both their differences and similarities. As previously described in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, irregular warfare is generally referred to in national, joint and service policy documents in the context of countering irregular threats (from the joint perspective) and is defined as follows: “A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.”<sup>9</sup> The *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint*

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *The U.S. Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges*, (Washington, DC, January 2010).

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, As Amended Through January 31, 2011 (Washington, DC: November 8, 2010), 189.

*Operating Concept Version 2.0*, the comprehensive Department of Defense publication which describes how the joint force will conduct missions and actions to combat irregular threats and identifies the required military capabilities, includes the five core irregular warfare operations and activities: counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency and stability operations.<sup>10</sup>

*The U.S. Navy's Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges* does not specifically provide a Navy definition for the term irregular challenges. A detailed study of the document reveals that: “. . . Irregular challenges [are] those challenges that manifest themselves in uncontrolled or ungoverned spaces, and that permit others to employ informational, economic, technological, and kinetic methods against civilian populations, and undermine governance.”<sup>11</sup>

Although irregular warfare concepts include a broad array of joint missions and activities as previously discussed, the Navy’s view of irregular challenges appears to be much more narrowly focused, nuanced and practical. The Navy is appropriately concerned with specific irregular challenges that may occur in the maritime domain, and a partial, ever growing list includes: violent extremism, terrorism, criminal activity, drug smuggling, human trafficking, piracy, and weapons proliferation.<sup>12</sup> The Navy’s approach to confronting irregular challenges, while both incorporating and differentiating joint irregular warfare concepts and elements, is discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0* (Washington, DC: May 17, 2010), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Alarik Fritz, Tony Freedman, and Peter Haussmann, *The Navy Role in Confronting Irregular Challenges: Implementing the Navy Vision for CIC* (Alexandria, VA: CNA Analysis & Solutions, March 2011), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 21-22.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **U.S. NAVY APPROACH TO CONFRONTING IRREGULAR CHALLENGES**

“Preventing wars is as important as winning wars.”<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Navy leadership believes that irregular warfare in the maritime context is less about kinetic and combat force operations emanating from the maritime domain and more about confronting irregular challenges: countering irregular threats, preventive security and conflict deterrence. Thus, in serving our national security interests, winning the peace is just as important as being able to deliver combat power.<sup>2</sup>

The Navy’s 2007 maritime strategy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, a first-ever combined maritime strategy co-signed by the three service chiefs of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, was built on the foundations of the 2005 *National Defense Strategy* and signaled a significant shift in the direction of the maritime services in stating “preventing wars is as important as winning wars.”<sup>3</sup> Although the Navy is charged and expected to maintain proficiency in traditional missions such as power projection and maritime security, this shift from “hard power” to “soft power” approaches is an attempt by the Navy to respond to the changing, complex and interconnected global operational environment of the twenty-first century; one that is complete with non-state actors, criminals, terrorists and insurgents, who are now able to challenge the maritime access now more than ever and pose a threat to the United States and global security. It is also recognition of a shift to more preventive activities.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, (Washington, DC, October 2007), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Richard R. Burgess, “Controlling Chaos,” *Seapower*, March 2010, 34.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, *Cooperative Strategy*, 4.

Using the sea as “vast maneuver space,” the Navy’s strategy is to use “seapower to influence actions and activities at sea and ashore.” “U.S. maritime forces will be characterized by regionally concentrated, forward-deployed task forces with the combat power to limit regional conflict, deter major power war, and should deterrence fail, win our Nation’s wars.”<sup>4</sup> The sea services, along with all the elements of national power, will now have increased roles in supporting irregular warfare and counterterrorism. As part of a persistent, global and distributed force, and through enhanced maritime security and domain awareness, the sea services will: “Foster and sustain cooperative relationships with more international partners” and will “Prevent or contain local disruptions before they impact the global system;”<sup>5</sup> in order to constrain the actors who pose irregular threats.

Following the release of *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) published yearly CNO Guidance in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, in order to articulate his vision for implementing the maritime strategy. Each year’s CNO Guidance document built on the previous one, developing and maturing themes contained in the maritime strategy. Although the Navy established the Navy Irregular Warfare Office in July 2008,<sup>6</sup> concepts and capabilities associated with Navy irregular warfare finally gained traction in the *CNO Guidance for 2010*: “We will define and institutionalize Navy’s role in cooperative security and irregular warfare.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, *Cooperative Strategy*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>6</sup> Message, 311621Z JUL 08, U.S. Navy, NAVADMIN, “Establishment of the Navy Irregular Warfare Office, (Washington, DC: July 31, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *CNO Guidance for 2010, Executing the Maritime Strategy*, (Washington, DC: September 2009), 11.

However, numerous challenges exist in understanding and executing preventive security which Rear Admiral Philip Greene, Director of Irregular Warfare in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, refers to as “elements of maritime disorder,” that often occur in the littorals. These include: piracy, proliferation, smuggling, trafficking and other illegal activity, and unauthorized fishing and mining the seabed that can have an effect on the local population.<sup>8</sup>

### **Irregular Challenges From the U.S. Navy Perspective**

In January 2010, the Chief of Naval Operations released his irregular warfare strategy document, *The U.S. Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges*, in which he introduced a new term into U.S. Navy lexicon and which the Navy has now embraced: “irregular challenges.” The vision statement reads:

The U.S. Navy will meet irregular challenges through a flexible, agile and broad array of multi-mission capabilities. We will emphasize Cooperative Security as part of a comprehensive government approach to mitigate the causes of insecurity and instability. We will operate in and from the maritime domain with joint and international partners to enhance regional security and stability, and to dissuade, deter, and when necessary, defeat irregular threats.<sup>9</sup>

The Navy’s vision is to leverage its predominance of operating in and from the maritime domain, as a “vast maneuver space,”<sup>10</sup> and to confront irregular challenges in their stages of early development, and to either inhibit or contain the spread of violent extremist, insurgent, terrorist or criminal activities and their effects in countries or regions of weak or failed governance. Confronting irregular challenges is outcome based, focusing on the following:

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<sup>8</sup> Burgess, 34.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *The U.S. Navy’s Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges*, (Washington, DC, January 2010), 3.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, *Cooperative Strategy*, 8.

- Increased effectiveness in stabilizing or strengthening regions.
- Enhanced regional awareness.
- Increased regional partner capacity.
- Expanded coordination and interoperability.<sup>11</sup>

“These outcomes support promoting regional security and stability, advancing the rule of law, promoting good governance and prosperity, and help partners better protect their people and resources.”<sup>12</sup>

Since the release of the *Vision*, the *CNO Guidance for 2011* emphasized that investment in force structure is needed to ensure we have “forces capable for confronting irregular challenges.”<sup>13</sup> This served notice that the Navy needs to rebalance how it is organized, trained and equipped to confront irregular challenges. However, it is not clear how the Navy intends to accomplish this.

The Navy’s capstone document, *Naval Operations Concept 2010*, was also released in May 2010 which links the maritime strategy (ends) to operations (ways) with respect to required force structure (means).<sup>14</sup> The Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard must be part of a whole-of-government solution to confront irregular challenges within the maritime domain and especially within the littorals. All three sea services must work together with the interagency, multinational partners and other governmental agencies, and must utilize their general purpose forces and military systems in ways never before imagined.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Vision*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *CNO Guidance for 2011, Executing the Maritime Strategy*, (Washington, DC: October 2010), 5.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Naval Operations Concept*, (Washington, DC: 2010), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 18.

## **Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges (CIC)**

The vision paper for confronting irregular challenges (CIC) is the Navy's response to contributing to whole-of-government approaches for preventive security efforts that address underlying causes of insecurity and instability. The Navy recognizes the nature of today's complex global security environment; one that continues to evolve. The irregular threats we face are complex, unpredictable and dangerous and require both traditional and non-traditional approaches.

The Navy's traditional focus resides in the global maritime domain. Although irregular challenges can occur in the open sea, they primarily emanate from the shores, from failed, failing states and ungoverned space. Thus, the maritime focus needs to shift from blue water (open sea), to green water (littorals, close to shore), and to brown water (inland rivers).

To confront irregular challenges, the Navy must conduct security cooperation activities to address challenges resulting from failed and failing states. It must develop enduring capabilities, competencies and new proficiencies that are foundational for CIC, while maintaining traditional warfighting readiness and capability. CIC demands more from today's Navy and from our future Navy and requires: new doctrine and changes to existing doctrine, balanced investment and efforts, refined operations to improve proficiencies and capacities, and development of new partnerships.<sup>16</sup>

The Navy's overall approach in CIC is to optimize the flexibility, scalability, agility and responsiveness of its naval forces while forward deployed with a "presence

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<sup>16</sup> Captain William Pflugrath, U.S. Navy, interview by author, Norfolk, VA, April 6, 2011.

with a purpose.”<sup>17</sup> Combined with joint, interagency and international partner efforts, the Navy enhances both local and regional security efforts by mitigating the effects of irregular challenges that can produce maritime disorder.

The Navy’s general purpose forces have the lead in confronting global irregular challenges. The versatility of today’s Navy is demonstrated with our trained crews easily transitioning from one mission set to the next without missing a beat. Examples include: Horn of Africa anti-piracy operations (including the rescue of Captain Richard Phillips of the MV *Maersk Alabama* in April 2010 off Somalia), West Africa maritime security operations, ballistic missile defense in the Mediterranean Sea and western Pacific, counterdrug operations in the Gulf of Mexico and off of South America, and humanitarian relief operations such as the Indonesian tsunami in December 2004. U.S. naval ships were some of the first responders during the Haiti earthquake disaster.

### **U.S. Navy CIC: Comparing and Contrasting to Irregular Warfare**

Confronting irregular challenges (CIC) is “less about warfare and more about the security environment.”<sup>18</sup> As previously mentioned, the Navy has been reluctant to include irregular warfare as a core mission area. Navy forces are considered “regular” forces. Irregular warfare is what the adversary does. Additionally, semantic problems exist with the term “irregular warfare” with respect to the interagency and other civilian agencies which do not support irregular activities or conduct warfare.

A more in depth analysis of the *Vision* reveals both alignment and perhaps deliberate deviation or error from the irregular warfare activities as defined in the

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<sup>17</sup> Burgess, 35.

<sup>18</sup> Rear Admiral Sinclair M. Harris, U.S. Navy, “Confronting Irregular Challenges,” PowerPoint Presentation at the Navy League Sea Air Space Exposition, National Harbor, MD, April 12, 2011, 11.

*Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0.*

Navy CIC includes only four of the five irregular warfare activities plus three additional activities,<sup>19</sup> as shown in figure 4.<sup>20</sup> The irregular warfare activities of foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and stability operations are core Navy CIC activities. Unconventional warfare has been omitted. Unconventional warfare is a core task for special operations forces and primarily occurs on land, so Navy general purpose forces do not directly conduct unconventional warfare. However, by its expeditionary nature and ability to project power ashore from the maritime domain, the Navy does indeed provide combat support to unconventional warfare forces. Additionally, the Chief of Naval Operations has created ambiguity when he stated: “Irregular warfare is part of the regular mission-set for the Navy.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, for the Navy, CIC has diverged from the context of joint doctrine and common understanding to something related to irregular warfare but still unique from other service doctrine and approaches.

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<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Vision*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Captain William Pflugrath, U.S. Navy, e-mail message to author, April 8, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, “Rhumb Lines: Confronting Irregular Challenges,” U.S. Department of the Navy, [http://www.navy.mil/navco/pages/rhumb\\_lines.html](http://www.navy.mil/navco/pages/rhumb_lines.html) (accessed September 13, 2010).

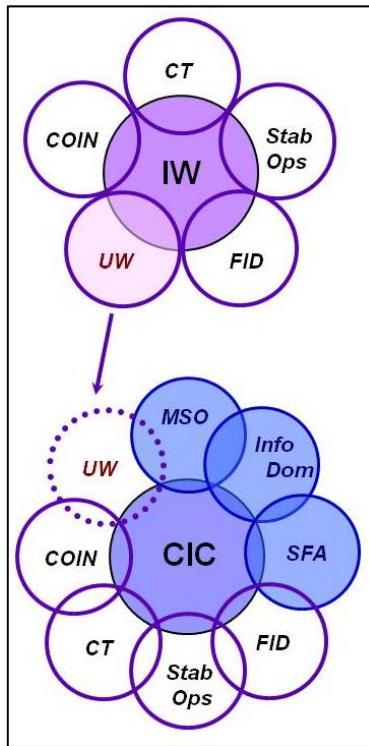


Figure 4. Irregular warfare and confronting irregular challenges (CIC).

Three additional activities included within CIC are information dominance, maritime security operations and security force assistance. These activities are associated with conflict prevention, an objective from our maritime strategy. Information dominance includes maritime domain awareness and a greater understanding of the complex operational environment. Through persistent and visible force presence, maritime security operations enhance regional security and stability. Security force assistance, a joint doctrinal term, includes supporting “the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.”<sup>22</sup>

The Navy’s vision for CIC appears to be in several ways narrower than irregular warfare, since it omits unconventional warfare; but in other ways broader than irregular

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<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, As Amended Through April 2010, (Washington, DC: April 12, 2001), 326.

warfare since it includes information dominance, maritime security operations and security force assistance. As a specific term, “confronting irregular challenges” is never defined in the Navy’s *Vision*, but described through its seven activities. Perhaps the Navy Irregular Warfare Office intended CIC to serve as a means through which specific end-states can be achieved rather than as a specific activity requiring a readily specific definition. Since CIC is considered more to be a strategy, having it referred to in an ambiguous nature allows it to be more inclusive of a wide range of required capabilities and requirements perceived by those Navy leaders who now have to execute the strategy.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Navy’s *Vision* suggests there are seven core CIC activities (maritime security force assistance, maritime security, maritime stability operations, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, and information dominance),<sup>24</sup> logically, they can be grouped and reduced to five. Security force assistance and foreign internal defense are often discussed together in the joint doctrine, and from the maritime perspective, they are functionally identical. Therefore, maritime security force assistance and maritime foreign internal defense are considered to be a combined Navy CIC activity described as maritime security force assistance. Counterinsurgency and counterterrorism are viewed as irregular warfare and conducted by special operations forces. As previously discussed, the Navy views itself in a supporting role to U.S. Special Operations Command in the conduct of irregular warfare

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<sup>23</sup> Pflugrath, interview.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Vision*, 4.

missions. Therefore, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism are considered to be a combined Navy CIC activity described as counterinsurgency/counterterrorism.<sup>25</sup>

The five Navy CIC activities or missions now include: maritime security force assistance, maritime security, maritime stability operations, counterinsurgency/counterterrorism, and information dominance. Figure 5 depicts the Navy strategic concept for confronting irregular challenges (CIC).<sup>26</sup> It describes the logic of required military forces, the specific maritime-based CIC missions, desired results or CIC objectives and the long-term CIC goal.

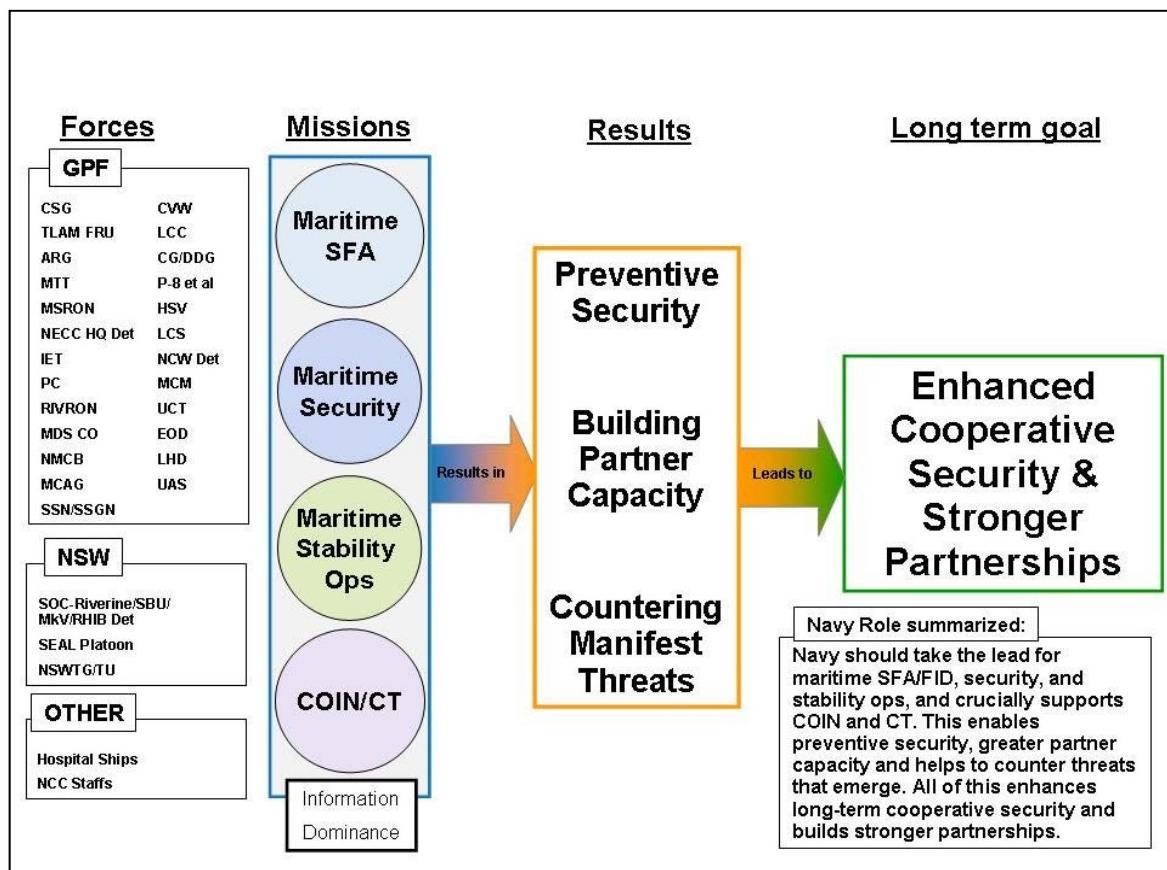


Figure 5. Navy strategic concept for confronting irregular challenges (CIC).

<sup>25</sup> Alarik Fritz, Tony Freedman, and Peter Haussmann, *The Navy Role in Confronting Irregular Challenges: Implementing the Navy Vision for CIC* (Alexandria, VA: CNA Analysis & Solutions, March 2011), 18.

<sup>26</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 3.

Analysis of the *Vision* reveals the Navy's role in CIC as follows: relying upon a combination of general purpose forces, special operations forces and other forces, the Navy has the primary responsibility for carrying out the four unique CIC missions of maritime security force assistance, maritime security, maritime stability operations and counterinsurgency/counterterrorism operations.

An overarching linkage of these Navy CIC missions is information dominance. The term “information dominance” is not doctrinal; rather, it is unique to the Navy. The concept of information dominance is “the ability to seize and control the information domain,” and refers to the “freedom of action to maneuver and act – conduct offensive and defensive actions, kinetically and non-kinetically – at the intersection of maritime, information and cyberspace domains.”<sup>27</sup> Information dominance appears to be a broader, more encompassing term than the normally accepted term: maritime domain awareness; since the Navy desires to expand its knowledge of the battle space from the maritime accesses and to project it ashore to support mission accomplishment. Not considered a mission unto itself, information dominance is an enabling function in support of Navy CIC missions. Insufficient information dominance would result in the sub-optimal accomplishment of the Navy CIC efforts.<sup>28</sup>

With the long-term goal of enhancing cooperative security and building stronger international and maritime partnerships, three intermediate CIC objectives are a direct result from Navy CIC missions: preventive security, building partner capacity and countering manifest threats (as defined below). These objectives are a derivation from the

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<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *The U.S. Navy's Vision for Information Dominance*, (Washington, DC, May 2010), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 20.

maritime strategy and are contained within the Navy CIC vision statement. Preventive security seeks to prevent the irregular threat from occurring in the first place. Building partner capacity of our international partners helps them address irregular challenges in their own country or region before U.S. assistance is required. Countering manifest threats involve actual combat operations to defeat irregular threats when and if they occur as a result of failing to achieve the desired objectives of preventive security and building partner capacity.

### **Summary**

Institutionalizing concepts associated with confronting irregular challenges within the Navy is a long-term effort. While carrying out the Chief of Naval Operations' *Vision*, support and buy-in across the fleet probably exists. However, coherency and prioritization of mission sets is required across the entire spectrum of cooperative security operations. As the Navy works to develop its strategy, the submarine force should invariably play some role. However, it necessary to first understand traditional submarine force capabilities in order to determine and optimize those capabilities most useful in support of the Navy's broader strategy of CIC. This discussion is developed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **TRADITIONAL SUBMARINE FORCE CAPABILITIES**

With a thorough understanding of irregular warfare and irregular challenges, this study can move to a central question. What current and future submarine force capabilities are required to support the U.S. Navy's confronting irregular challenges (CIC) vision and ultimately support the joint force and Combatant Commander? It is important to understand the CIC operational environment as well as the environment in which the submarine operates in and the unique capabilities of the submarine.

Irregular challenges that the Navy is concerned with emanate from the shore and the associated maritime domain. The maritime domain may serve as an enabler or as a medium through which irregular threat actors transit throughout the littorals of a country or region. The Navy has diminishing reach to CIC the further inland the irregular threat actors are operating. Land component commanders typically assume this responsibility for addressing irregular challenges that occur far inland. Likewise, the submarine, operating in the maritime domain, can position itself close to shore, often just a few miles from the coast, as long as the water is deep enough for safe operation; but its inward reach is limited. Despite this basic limitation, the submarine force can leverage certain unique advantages in support of the joint force commander regardless of the source of the threat or challenge.

U.S submarines have historically enjoyed significant advantage over adversary submarine forces due to their numerous unique and mostly unequalled operational capabilities. These capabilities include: stealth and covertness, survivability, forward presence, endurance, persistence, agility and flexibility, multi-mission configurability, a

platform for capability experimentation and improvement, secure forward basing for special operations forces and irregular warfare missions, and firepower.

The submarine, by the nature of its stealth and covertness, is able to conduct undetected non-provocative operations. Our adversaries do not currently possess land, air, space or sea based technologies to counter our impunity to operate undetected. Thus, the submarine is the most survivable weapons system in the U.S. military. Irregular counters to U.S. submarines are most certainly unequipped to detect submarines.

Through forward presence, submarines can operate in friendly, contested, and hostile environments: in the greater maritime domain (international waters, deep, blue water) and littoral areas (shallow, green water, close to shore), with or without the invitation or knowledge of the host nation. During times of international crisis which threaten United States or global security, submarines, not the most commonly believed aircraft carrier, are most often first on the scene, “on scene but unseen,”<sup>1</sup> and provide immediate options for the President. This enables an ongoing and non-transitory level of presence that is well suited to the irregular warfare environment.

Powered by nuclear energy, submarines possess the endurance to remain at-sea for months at a time, away from home port or overseas bases, without the requirement for vulnerable logistics support. This practically unlimited endurance enables persistence; and the ability of the submarine to remain on-station for long periods of time in order to conduct time-intensive missions such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, which can directly support Combatant Commander irregular warfare requirements. Nuclear power also provides the submarine with high speed which gives the submarine

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<sup>1</sup> Commander, U.S. Submarine Force, *Strategic Communications Plan: Communicating The Unique Value Of The Silent Service*, (Norfolk, VA: March 2009), 4.

agility to reposition and flexibility to quickly shift mission execution, thus providing a range of submarine employment options for the Combatant Commander.

With increasing requirements and demand from the Combatant Commanders in confronting the ever changing and complex irregular threat operational environment, the submarine force has met these challenges with an even greater contribution to the joint force by developing multi-mission capabilities through configurable payloads such as the deployment of weapons, sensors and unmanned vehicles. The submarine force's newest class of submarine, the *Virginia*, is the first post-Cold War design and it has been optimized to take into account twenty-first century global security challenges. The torpedo room has been specifically designed to be reconfigured to support a variety of payloads: weapons, unmanned aerial, surface and underwater vehicles, special operations forces and other future technologies and capabilities.<sup>2</sup> Due to its nature as a scarce national asset, submarines must deploy to support a wide variety of missions both planned for and the unknown, since once they have left homeport, reconfiguration at sea is impossible and overseas bases cannot always provide the security for nor support changing payloads, weapons or other configurable systems.

The four *Ohio* class converted guided missile submarines (SSGN) deploy with one of their twenty-two reconfigurable large-diameter launch tubes designated for experimentation. As new payloads and technologies are developed, they can be immediately tested in real-world forward-deployed operational environments; thus

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<sup>2</sup> Commander, U.S. Submarine Force, “Submarine Force Brief,” PowerPoint Presentation, Norfolk, VA, 2010, 21.

shortening the development, testing and implementation life-cycles of new capabilities.<sup>3</sup>

These new technologies, such as unmanned vehicles and other sensors, specifically designed to address the irregular threat environment, can now be implemented faster than ever before in support of Combatant Commander requirements.

The SSGNs are the premier submarine platform in support of irregular warfare missions while providing a secure at-sea forward base to deploy and recover special operations forces. Leveraging on the strengths of the Navy's nuclear powered submarine fleet, the SSGN delivers additional capabilities in support of joint operations: assured access, acquiring actionable intelligence, assure, dissuade and deter, deliver global striking power (capable of carrying 154 Tomahawk land-attack missiles and deploying 102 special operations forces), and modularity and payload volume.<sup>4</sup>

Fast attack submarines (SSN) also have the firepower ability to attack both sea and land targets without warning with an arsenal of anti-submarine torpedoes, anti-surface ship torpedoes and missiles, land-attack missiles, and mines. However, both SSN and SSGN have significant limitations including the inability to reload at sea. So once weapons have been expended; the submarine can no longer deliver combat power and is essentially defenseless. The Combatant Commander must understand submarine firepower capabilities in support of irregular warfare missions, but also understand the limitations of the finite weapons load capacity onboard the submarine.

These submarine force capabilities are the life-blood to the day-to-day successful accomplishment of the following traditional submarine missions: anti-submarine warfare,

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<sup>3</sup> Rear Admiral Mark Kenny and Commander James Belz, U.S. Navy, "SSGN: Supporting the Navy's Irregular Warfare Campaign," *RUSI Defense Systems*, October 2008, 31.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Fleet Forces Command. *Nuclear-Powered Guided Missile Submarine (SSGN) Concept of Operations Version 1.5.* (Norfolk, VA: February 2006), i-iii.

anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, strike warfare, mine warfare, counter drug operations, and special operations. On any given day, approximately 12<sup>5</sup> of our 58<sup>6</sup> SSN/SSGN submarines are forward-deployed, supporting our maritime strategy and providing multi-mission support to the Combatant Commander. However, the Combatant Commander continues to demand more and more from the Navy and the submarine force, to meet the ever growing list of regular and irregular threats challenging U.S. national security interests around the world. To understand how the submarine force can optimize and adapt these current capabilities or develop new capabilities in order to confront irregular challenges (CIC), it is necessary to understand the specific CIC requirements being demanded of the submarine force and how these can effectively coincide. These are discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>5</sup> Commander, U.S. Submarine Force, *Strategic Communications Plan*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Commander, U.S. Submarine Force, “Submarine Force Brief,” 2.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

### **U.S. SUBMARINE FORCE MEETING TODAY'S IRREGULAR CHALLENGES: HOW WE GET THERE**

In order to understand the specific confronting irregular challenges (CIC) requirements that can be satisfied or addressed by the submarine force, it is first necessary to define specific U.S. Navy CIC capability areas: those actions that the Navy as a service will need to take, and their required capabilities, in order to successfully confront irregular challenges.

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, Navy CIC missions differ from joint irregular warfare missions because the Navy operates in the maritime domain and has elected to focus more on the broader area of irregular challenges rather than on the narrower area of irregular warfare. Since the Navy is primarily responsible for sea-based warfare, it has assumed the lead in conducting the core maritime missions in support of CIC: maritime security force assistance, maritime security, maritime stability operations, and supporting joint counterinsurgency and counterterrorism special operations force missions;<sup>1</sup> all linked by the enabling function of information dominance.<sup>2</sup> The Navy will conduct joint and combined military operations while cooperating with the interagency and coalition partners to confront those irregular challenges associated with regional instability, insurgency, crime and violent extremism. Successful accomplishment of these missions should support and contribute to the positive results that emerge from preventive security and building partner capacity; and, should these efforts fail, decisive

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<sup>1</sup> Alarik Fritz, Tony Freedman, and Peter Haussmann, *The Navy Role in Confronting Irregular Challenges: Implementing the Navy Vision for CIC* (Alexandria, VA: CNA Analysis & Solutions, March 2011), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 20.

combat power will be used to counter manifest threats. Figure 6 is a conceptual depiction that illustrates these logical connections.<sup>3</sup> All of these efforts are complementary and are directed toward achieving enhanced cooperative security and building stronger partnerships with the long-term goal of preventing irregular challenges from occurring in the first place.

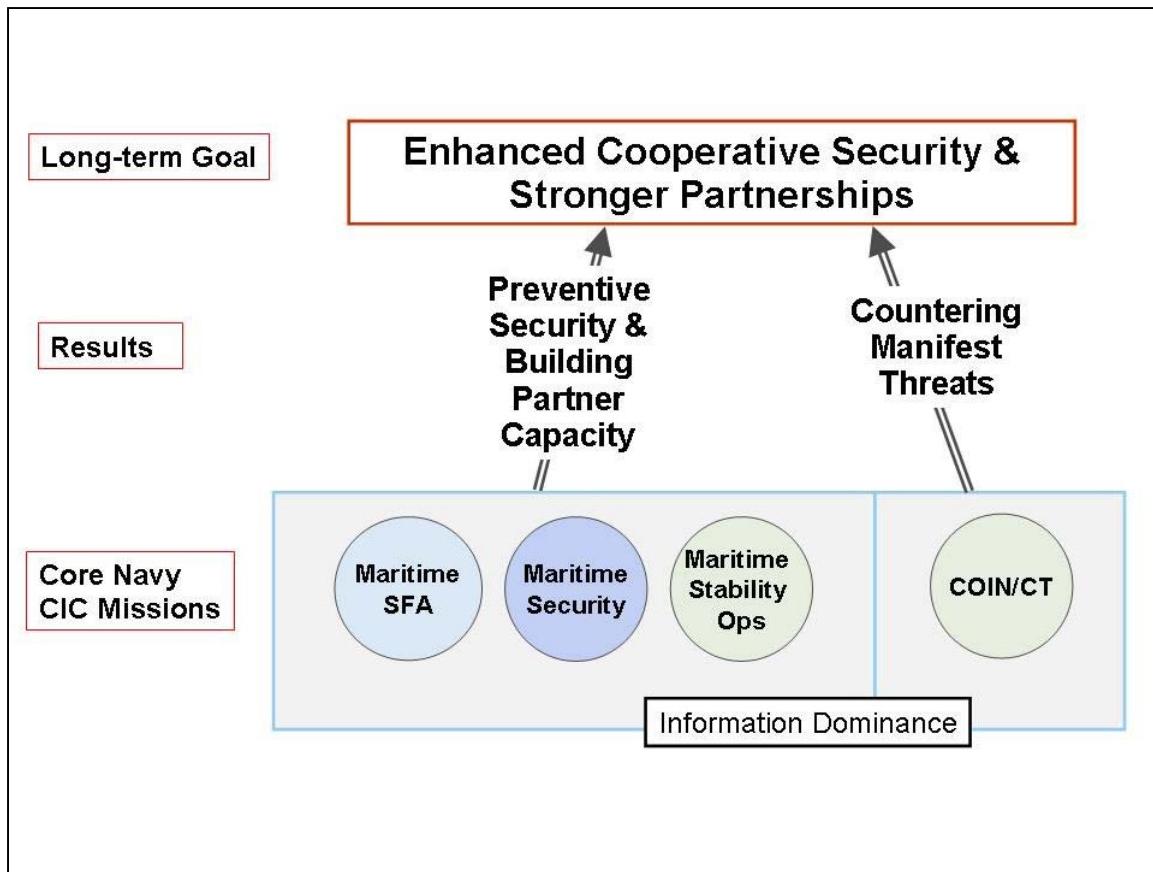


Figure 6. Conceptual map of U.S. Navy vision for CIC.

In order to understand the specific CIC capabilities expected from the submarine force, it is necessary to further define and refine the requirements for Navy CIC; the range of actions and capabilities the Navy as a service will need to take in order to successfully confront irregular challenges. Then, it is necessary to determine what

<sup>3</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 26.

submarine force capabilities and forces are uniquely or most suitable for CIC. Many submarine capabilities are likely useful for meeting both conventional and irregular challenges. However, the ensuing discussion will focus on those capabilities primarily useful for CIC efforts and which play to the strengths of the submarine platform.

### **Joint Irregular Warfare Capabilities and Requirements**

As previously discussed, the three main characteristics of Navy CIC are the maritime nature, the Navy focus on irregular challenges vice irregular warfare, and the long-term goal of enhanced cooperative security and building stronger partnerships.<sup>4</sup> Since Navy CIC has been defined to be a broader construct than irregular warfare, in order to understand Navy CIC capabilities and requirements, it is helpful to refer back to the *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0* and to identify the eight irregular warfare capabilities:<sup>5</sup>

- Design the Campaign.
- Conduct Preparation of the Environment.
- Integrate Activities With Interagency and Multi-National Partners.
- Develop Within the Host Nation an Enduring Capability to Establish and Maintain Security, Provide Legitimate Governance, and Foster Develop Programs that Address Root Grievances.
- Conduct Operations to Disrupt and Defeat Adversaries.
- Control and Influence Populations and Resources.
- Sustain the Campaign.
- Assess Plans and Operations.

### **Navy CIC Capabilities and Requirements**

The capabilities previously discussed, which span the entire range of operations of the joint force, are those required to conduct irregular warfare. The *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0*, in turn, provides a

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<sup>4</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 27.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0*, (Washington, DC: May 17, 2010), D-1-D-6.

useful framework for the Navy to derive those capabilities required for confronting irregular challenges (CIC). Adapting these joint irregular warfare capabilities, the following are the eight corresponding Navy CIC capability areas:<sup>6</sup>

- Navy CIC Campaign Design.
- Navy CIC Preparation of the Environment.
- Integration of Navy CIC Activities With Interagency and Multi-National Partners.
- Navy CIC Host Nation Development.
- Navy CIC Operations to Disrupt, Deny and Defeat Adversaries.
- Navy CIC Strategic Communications.
- Sustaining of the Navy CIC Campaign.
- Assessment of Navy CIC Plans and Operations.

The following is a brief discussion of each Navy CIC capability area and how the Navy intends to accomplish each area in broad terms. Thereafter, it will be shown how these Navy CIC capability areas directly apply to Navy unit-level and then submarine force specific required CIC capabilities and requirements necessary to support Navy CIC efforts.

Maritime based intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), command and control (C2), headquarters (HQ) capabilities and information networks are used to assess the drivers of instability and their effects on relevant populations and potential adversaries. The Navy CIC campaign design is developed from this assessment to determine appropriate Navy CIC operations in conjunction with other joint forces and host nation personnel.<sup>7</sup> Through its capabilities of forward presence and persistence, a submarine can collect valuable information through ISR operations and can report to C2

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<sup>6</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 32

and higher HQ elements for effective decision making on the overall CIC campaign design.

The Navy will accomplish intelligence preparation of the CIC environment through gaining and maintaining unobtrusive offshore maritime access. An aircraft carrier or other command ship typically functions as the C2/HQ at-sea forward-based host for collecting, organizing and analyzing maritime based intelligence information in order to support joint military and multi-national operations and to support interagency efforts. As a clandestine platform, a submarine has unique capability for ISR but generally has limited capabilities for C2/HQ. Further discussion on submarine specific CIC capabilities are detailed later in this chapter. Other avenues for Navy and submarine force information collection include fleet port visits, combined exercises, and personnel exchange and training programs.<sup>8</sup>

Through information sharing, planning integration, and synchronization of operations, the Navy will integrate its CIC activities with interagency and multinational partners. A liaison officer exchange program amongst all participants can enhance coordination and promote unity of effort.<sup>9</sup> As previously discussed, the submarine force can contribute to information sharing through port visits, combined exercises and liaison officer exchange programs, but the submarine itself, mainly due to size limitations and operational security concerns, is ill-suited for useful interagency and multinational integration in support of Navy CIC efforts.

Based on its mobility and small footprint, the Navy is ideally suited to promote CIC host nation (HN) development without giving the appearance that might agitate HN

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<sup>8</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 33.

internal politics or sovereignty concerns. HN training activities could include: personnel training in port security, maritime law, medical skills, mine detection and clearance, intelligence collection and fusion, construction (underwater and land), law enforcement (procedures in visit, board, search and seizure), harbor surveys, navy diving and salvage, and small boat operations. All the activities fall within the scope of the Navy mission area of maritime security. The Navy and submarine force can foster HN and regional security cooperation by taking the lead in conducting these types of meaningful training activities for host nations that might not have the initial capacity to develop internal programs on their own.<sup>10</sup>

When CIC efforts fail to achieve the desired results of preventive security and building partner capacity, the Navy will counter these manifest irregular threats through operations to disrupt, deny and defeat adversaries through kinetic (precision strike) operations, cyberspace operations (attack and defense), while continuing to conduct non-kinetic (preventive security and building partner capacity) operations. Precision strike activities include carrier air wing strike, Marine Corps expeditionary forces, surface ship and submarine launched Tomahawk land attack missiles, and Naval Special Warfare units launched from either surface or submarine platforms. Other U.S. military and interagency organizations will also conduct cyberspace operations in support of Navy CIC efforts.<sup>11</sup> As part of the Navy CIC strategy concept, countering manifest threats involve actual combat operations to defeat irregular threats when and if they occur as a result of failing to achieve the desired objectives of preventive security and building partner capacity.

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<sup>10</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

The Navy will conduct CIC strategic communications to effectively communicate U.S. government messages by: leveraging its forward presence, through port visits, combined exercises, expeditionary training activities, and HN developmental actions and activities. A sea-based platform can also provide an unobtrusive means to carry out psychological operations and other information operations campaigns. However, unlike the surface Navy, the submarine force prefers to operate the submarine undetected, and the Navy does not typically include the presence (or not) of a submarine off an adversary's shores into its CIC strategic communications plan. Actual knowledge of a submarine's presence might cause the adversary to change communications or other operational patterns which could disrupt joint force CIC efforts. In most cases, little is gained in CIC through announced or actual visible presence of a submarine.<sup>12</sup>

Through sea-basing, the Navy will sustain the CIC campaign with large-deck command ships which are ideally suited to serve as a maritime HQ, and host and integrate HN, multinational, interagency and coalition partners. The sea-base also supports the logistics supply chain moving personnel and supplies ashore and integrating with HN logistics chains.<sup>13</sup> Due to size limitations, the submarine does not factor into sustaining the CIC campaign from a logistics standpoint; however, the guided missile submarine, as previously discussed in Chapter 5, can effectively perform HQ and sea-basing of special operations forces in support of specific irregular warfare missions.

The Navy will use the C2, ISR and HQ functions to collect data for the assessment of Navy CIC plans and operations. Data will be obtained through ISR operations, HN interactions (both civil and military), local population and battle damage

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Navy Officer, interview by author, Norfolk, VA, April 27, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 35.

assessments. This assessment will determine the local and regional effectiveness of Navy CIC operations and will be incorporated into future Navy CIC plans and operations.<sup>14</sup> A submarine can contribute to CIC plans and operations assessment through the collection of information through ISR operations, port visits and HN interactions.

As demonstrated, the Navy CIC capability areas can be qualitatively derived from joint irregular warfare capabilities. To determine unit-level capabilities required to accomplish Navy CIC missions, it was necessary to develop an understanding of service-wide Navy CIC capabilities. Based on these defined Navy CIC capability areas, the following discussion focuses on deriving submarine force specific capabilities and requirements necessary to achieve CIC efforts.

### **Submarine Force CIC Capabilities and Requirements**

Using these defined Navy CIC capabilities, Navy unit-level confronting irregular challenges (CIC) capabilities and requirements can be discerned and enumerated. Table 1 graphically summarizes a wide range of specific submarine force CIC capabilities which contribute to the desired CIC outcomes and which are linked to Navy CIC missions.

Submarine force CIC capabilities shown are those that the submarine force currently performs, or could perform; regardless of whether the submarine force is actually executing a CIC capability. Most CIC capabilities are common to both fast attack submarines (SSN) and guided missile submarines (SSGN); differences are specifically noted. (Table 1 contains data derived from *The Navy Role in Confronting Irregular*

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<sup>14</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 36.

*Challenges: Implementing the Navy Vision for CIC* but also includes content as determined by the author.)<sup>15</sup>

Table 1 succinctly depicts the submarine force capabilities most useful and suitable for Navy CIC missions. Looking across the table, the ties between submarine force CIC capabilities and requirements, to Navy CIC results and to CIC missions are shown. Applicable traditional submarine force capabilities, as discussed in Chapter 5, are included for continuity and completeness purposes.

The key conclusions that can be derived from Table 1 are numerous. The submarine force is able to contribute a broad range of CIC capabilities to include: intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), joint task force HQ/C2 functions (SSGN only), maritime interception operations, and mine reconnaissance and detection. All these capabilities generally support the CIC results of preventive security and building partner capacity. Additionally, ISR may provide cueing for precision strike, and along with HQ/C2, support SSGN special operations to counter irregular threats. Finally, submarine force organizational international engagement activities support preventive security and building partner capacity.

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<sup>15</sup> Fritz, Freedman, and Haussmann, 38-40,44,46.

Table 1. Submarine Force CIC Capabilities and Requirements Supporting U.S. Navy CIC Missions

<b>Submarine Force CIC Capabilities / Requirements</b>	<b>U.S. Navy CIC Result</b>	<b>U.S. Navy CIC Missions Supported</b>	<b>Traditional Submarine Force Capability</b>
Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Planning, Collection, Analysis, Production and Dissemination (General ISR)	Preventive Security, Building Partner Capacity	Maritime Security, Maritime SFA, Information Dominance, COIN/CT	Stealth and Covertness, Persistence, Forward Presence
Maritime ISR Planning, Collection, Analysis, Production and Dissemination (Precise ISR)	Preventive Security, Countering Manifest Threats	Maritime Security, Information Dominance, COIN/CT	Stealth and Covertness, Persistence, Forward Presence, Multi-mission Configurability
Command and Control (C2) for ISR / Intelligence Fusion	Preventive Security, Countering Manifest Threats	Maritime Security, Information Dominance, COIN/CT	Stealth and Covertness, Persistence, Forward Presence, Multi-mission Configurability
Maritime Joint Task Force HQ/C2 Functions (Including Interagency and Non-Governmental Organizations) (SSGN only)	Preventive Security, Building Partner Capacity	Maritime Security, Maritime SFA, COIN/CT	Stealth and Covertness, Persistence, Forward Presence, Multi-mission Configurability
Maritime Interception Operations, Training and Exercises	Preventive Security, Building Partner Capacity	Maritime Security, Maritime SFA, COIN/CT	Stealth and Covertness, Persistence, Forward Presence, Endurance
Mine Reconnaissance and Detection	Preventive Security, Building Partner Capacity	Maritime SFA	Multi-mission Configurability

Table 1. Submarine Force CIC Capabilities and Requirements Supporting U.S. Navy CIC Missions (Continued)

<b>Submarine force CIC Capabilities / Requirements</b>	<b>U.S. Navy CIC Result</b>	<b>U.S. Navy CIC Missions Supported</b>	<b>Traditional Submarine Force Capability</b>
Precision Strike (Via Tomahawk Land Attack Missile and Special Operations Forces (SOF) Insertion/Extraction)	Countering Manifest Threats	Maritime Security, COIN/CT	Stealth and Covertness, Secure Forward-Basing, Firepower
HQ/C2 Support to SOF (Planning/Execution) (SSGN only)	Countering Manifest Threats	Maritime Security, COIN/CT, Information Dominance	Multi-mission Configurability, Secure Forward-Basing, Firepower
Submarine Force Level Specific International Cooperation, Training and Exercise Support	Preventive Security, Building Partner Capacity	Maritime SFA, Maritime Stability OPS	Submarine Culture, Personnel and Training
Submarine Force Level Other Fleet International Training and Exercise Support	Preventive Security, Building Partner Capacity	Maritime SFA, Maritime Stability OPS	Submarine Culture, Personnel and Training

## **Submarine Force as a Resource for Joint Force CIC**

The previous discussion demonstrated the linking of capabilities and requirements for joint irregular warfare to *The U.S. Navy's Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges* (CIC), to specific Navy CIC missions and goals and to how the submarine force at the unit-level and force-level can contribute to Navy CIC efforts, and to the joint force in confronting and combating irregular threats. Many submarine capabilities such as stealth and covertness, forward presence, persistence, multi-mission capability, secure forward basing and fire power are likely useful for meeting both conventional and irregular challenges. However, the follow-on discussion focuses on those capabilities primarily useful for Navy CIC efforts which play to the strengths and reveal the weaknesses of the submarine platform, and to the submarine force as an organization in support of CIC.

### **Submarine Force Strengths Versus Weaknesses in CIC**

The submarine force's historical strengths are its multi-mission capability and its unmatched capability of stealth and covertness, which have enabled persistent forward presence, agility and flexibility. These characteristics allow the submarine to operate unchallenged in forward areas and to perform all traditional submarine force missions as well as the specific irregular threat missions required by the Combatant Commanders.

Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance remains a core submarine mission of the fast attack submarine (SSN) supporting maritime domain awareness, traditionally known throughout the submarine force as “indications and warnings” (I&W). I&W missions were a mainstay of submarine operations during the Cold War. Through impressive combined military-industry innovation, new technologies have also delivered

a plethora of new antennas, periscopes, communications systems, and payloads consisting of aerial, surface and underwater vehicles, other sensors and distributed netted systems. Employment of all of these sensors and payloads can extend the ISR reach and influence of the submarine throughout the maritime domain and can serve as a force multiplier. Combatant Commanders need volumes of information to confront irregular challenges and to defeat irregular threats. Depending on the political, geographical or other tactical constraints, the submarine may be the only available resource able to provide this information to the joint force.

The submarine force is still learning and adapting how to employ and optimize these capabilities beyond the hull of the submarine and to effectively integrate them into joint force CIC efforts. Information exploitation and fusion tools are needed to further take advantage of unmanned aerial, surface, underwater vehicles, other electronic sensors and data from joint and interagency organizations. Once data is assimilated and analyzed, new information sharing protocols need to be established so that we can better engage with our partners. Information sharing directly contributes to improved preventive security and better partner capacity building efforts with our partners; thus greatly contributing to regional and global security.<sup>16</sup>

Three major physical limitations of submarine operations at-sea continue to provide the greatest challenges for submarine force integration into the joint force command which include: the submarine has to generally operate near the surface of the water, effects of weather and sea state, and bandwidth limitations of communications systems and sensors. These limitations can impact the submarine's full potential to

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<sup>16</sup> Richard R. Burgess, "Controlling Chaos," *Seapower*, March 2010, 36.

contribute to CIC. Weather, sea-state and near surface operations place operational limitations on the submarine since it needs to patrol at very slow speeds with a periscope or communications mast or other sensor raised to just a few feet above the surface of the water. Any protrusion may be detected visually, by radar or through other means such as infrared. This raises the potential for counter-detection, thus compromising mission operational security which could negatively affect the successful accomplishment of all submarine CIC efforts as well as jeopardize other joint force political objectives.

Additionally, near surface operations although necessary for CIC supporting missions such as ISR and precision strike, limit the effectiveness of the submarine being able to carry out other simultaneous missions such as anti-submarine warfare.

Despite recent technological improvements, bandwidth limitations of communication systems and increased external organizational communication requirements continue to be a bane for the submarine force. Today's data rich environment of constant communications, huge data files and video streaming continue to overwhelm submarine communication system capabilities, thus limiting the submarine's ability to effectively interact with and contribute to the joint force commander. Below the surface of the water, true high data rate technological solutions have not been found to solve the "communication at depth and speed" problem. This problem impedes the ability of the submarine to securely communicate and share data at high data rates well below the surface of the water while operating at tactical speed. Finally, whether on the surface, at "periscope depth," or operating in the depths of the ocean, constant or frequent external communications are considered anathema to the rich submarine culture of the "Silent Service." Submariners prefer to operate independently under mission-type orders and

under radio silence. The joint force, facing complex and dynamic operational environment of irregular threats and challenges, requires thorough integration of all its military forces, coalition partners and civilian agencies. Unity of efforts requires effective and timely communications. Communication system physical limitations, as well as submarine force cultural paradigms, may limit the submarine's ability to communicate at the high level the joint force requires;<sup>17</sup> thus marginalizing its potential for effective support to CIC missions.

The four *Ohio* class guided missile submarines (SSGN) are the premier current irregular warfare platform of choice by the combatant commander. In addition to complementing the SSNs for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and other multi-mission capability, the SSGN has unmatched capability and capacity to provide a secure at-sea forward-base to deploy and recover special operations forces and to deliver precision strike weapons. Additionally, with its Battle Management Center, manned by an embarked Joint Special Operations Task Force, the SSGN can serve as the command and control node for special operations forces and can perform onboard real-time processing, analysis and dissemination of ISR information. However, the SSGNs will reach their end of service lives by 2030. The Navy has no current shipbuilding plan to recapitalize this capability

This presents a significant negative impact to warfighting options for the Combatant Commander, resulting in a major reduction in theater-wide strike payload capacity, insertion/extraction of next generation special operations forces, and other payload options such as unmanned aerial, surface, and underwater vehicles, and the

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Navy Officer, e-mail message to author, April 29, 2011.

ability to deploy many other potential sensors and distributed netted systems within the maritime domain. *Los Angeles* class and *Virginia* class SSNs will continue to deliver strike payloads but with far less capacity than SSGNs. Although insertion of large-diameter launch tubes are envisioned for modified *Virginia* class submarines, it is not clear what roles this capability will play in being able to effectively deliver payloads and/or special operations forces to combat irregular threats. But it is clearly evident that SSN capacity will again be far less than that of the SSGN and will most likely not meet Combatant Commander CIC requirements.

#### Gaps and Disconnects

Within the submarine force, the Navy at-large, and across the entire joint force, there is a move toward technology solutions in support of combating irregular threats; specifically in the development of unmanned aerial, surface and underwater vehicles. To help promote alignment and efficiency, in October 2009, the Intelligence (N2) and Communications (N6) Directorates of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations merged to become the Information Dominance Directorate, the single point of contact within the service for maritime domain awareness. The newly formed N2/N6 has assumed responsibility for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and unmanned systems across the Navy. This has raised questions and concerns within the submarine force since submarine warfare development programs are generally highly classified and are programmed through the Submarine Warfare Division. With technology development costs continuing to rise and Department of Defense budgets expected to decrease, the submarine force will be greatly challenged to deliver systems designed for irregular warfare and confronting irregular challenges (CIC) as these will

compete against dollars necessary for core submarine recapitalization programs. Finally, centrally managed and funded “Big-Navy” programs do not necessarily support the “little guy;” rather, they support larger Navy initiatives, thus raising additional concern throughout the submarine force.<sup>18</sup>

Limited force structure, resources and funding after the Cold War drawdown of the early 1990s have resulted in a submarine force consisting of approximately fifty-four fast attack submarines (SSN) and four guided missile submarines (SSGN). SSNs, considered to be general purpose forces, are potentially enablers of longer-term CIC efforts based on their larger numbers and thus greater forward presence, and more robust ISR capabilities as compared to the SSGN. However, the SSGN force, deployed with special operations forces (SOF) and an embarked Joint Special Operations Task Force for situational and mission-specific command and control and headquarters functionality, provide unsurpassed short-term precision strike and SOF capacity and capability. As previously mentioned, soon there will be insufficient numbers of SSGNs to satisfy the CIC needs of the Combatant Commander. Without a desire or a plan to build replacement SSGNs, the Navy needs to decide what the future holds and role for submarine-based SOF capability.

For the most part, the following submarine force’s primary missions have remained unchanged since the end of the Cold War: anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), strike warfare, mine warfare, counterdrug operations and special operations. Submariners recognize these as mainstay missions. However, the missions of ASW and ISR stand out as the core

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Navy Officer, e-mail message to author, April 29, 2011.

submarine missions since they are most often conducted day-in and day-out and are in most demand by the Combatant Commander, while actual strike and special operations missions are conducted less frequently.<sup>19</sup> Since ASW and ISR are generally viewed as routine activities even in forward-deployed locations, there is no real connection to operating the submarine force any differently in today's new, complex irregular threat environment. In these missions, although the submarine can continually fulfill a critical CIC task, attitudes and perceptions across the submarine force regarding submarine operations remain stuck in Cold War paradigms.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the correlation between current submarine operations and the Navy's *Vision for CIC* remains vague; and imperceptible changes are seen throughout the submarine force, although many have argued, as shown in this paper, that the operational threat environment has dramatically changed over the past decade from traditional and conventional adversaries to one consisting of irregular and non-state threats. These perspectives from submarine force leadership lend itself to a "business-as-usual" mindset which can have significant isolationist effects on future submarine program procurement strategies and plans, concepts of operation and training, and efforts for increased integration throughout the joint force.

Finally, CIC operations will most likely involve whole-of-government solutions requiring the Navy to coordinate CIC efforts with the other armed services, the interagency, international organizations and coalition partners. The submarine does not play well into whole-of-government solutions due to inherent shipboard limitations and a

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<sup>19</sup> Commander, U.S. Submarine Force, *Strategic Communications Plan: Communicating The Unique Value Of The Silent Service*, (Norfolk, VA: March 2009), 3.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Navy Officer, interview by author, Norfolk, VA, April 27, 2011.

culture of being the “Silent Service.” Operational security requirements, real or perceived most often prevent useful integration into whole-of-government or truly unified action operations, even where there may be a useful fit.

#### CIC Burden Sharing

The Navy is the lead armed service to assume maritime CIC efforts, and within the depths of the maritime domain, the submarine, through multi-mission capabilities, is the ideal weapons platform that can go into hostile, contested or denied coastal areas to provide some immediate joint force CIC options. The submarine can remain on-station for sustained periods of time, without the requirement for logistics support or nearby basing, or even the knowledge or approval of the host or regional nations. The Navy can choose whether or not to make the submarine’s presence known, as part of its strategic communications strategy for the given political, strategic or tactical situation. There are key capabilities and roles of the submarine force in CIC.

Despite being able to provide certain rapid CIC response efforts, the submarine may have limited utility unless it is effectively partnered with appropriate elements of the other U.S. armed services, which offer comparative advantages and different approaches to confronting irregular threats. The Army views irregular warfare as different and distinct from conventional warfare. Although it has clearly concentrated its focus to land-based aspects of irregular warfare, in addition to being prepared for major combat operations, the Army also maintains it must also be prepared to confront the irregular threats of today’s complex and uncertain operational environment, throughout the entire spectrum of conflict consisting of offensive, defensive, stability and civil support

operations.<sup>21</sup> The area where the submarine force shares most in common with Army CIC efforts is through its support of special operations forces (SOF). The joint force commander should leverage SSGN embarked SOF in coordinated operations with land-based SOF when mission requirements dictate their employment.

The Marine Corps is also focused on operating in an irregular warfare environment and has essentially synchronized its approaches and priorities to counterinsurgency with the Army. As an expeditionary and versatile force, the Marine Corps emphasizes readiness to deploy on short notice into areas of conflict to provide an initial land-based force for direct confrontation with the irregular threat. The submarine's first on-scene clandestine ISR capabilities directly support the joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment. This enhances the "from-the-sea" expeditionary deployment of initial Marine Corps forces into potentially hostile environments, thus contributing to joint force CIC missions and efforts.

The Air Force has also recognized that the conduct of irregular warfare is sufficiently distinct and different from traditional warfare and has some of the very best doctrine defining its approaches. The Air Force focuses on supporting irregular warfare missions using its significant capabilities throughout its three domains of air, space and cyberspace.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, Air Force resources are devoted to information operations such as ISR, psychological operations, intelligence/counterintelligence, and command and control; and other priorities such as precision engagement and building partner capacity through military-to-military engagement programs and partnering with nations'

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<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 C1, *Operations*, (Washington, DC: February 22, 2011), 1-20.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, *Irregular Warfare*, (Washington, DC: August 1, 2007), 1.

air forces. It is apparent that the Navy and Air Force can work together in the technological development and employment of unmanned aerial vehicles for ISR missions in remote locations where the Air Force cannot secure nearby access or basing rights. The submarine can operate in any country's adjacent waters without impunity and can provide a secure forward-base for the covert launching and recovering of ISR assets, thus providing maritime and near-shore domain awareness and intelligence collection. Control and information operations of these ISR assets can be shared or passed to/from the submarine, other Navy assets, and Air Force or land-based operators. Navy and Air Force coordinated ISR and unmanned aerial vehicle programs and concepts of operations offer great promise in providing extremely flexible and capable options for the Combatant Commander in generating informational awareness of complex and remote CIC operational environments in order to execute appropriate missions.

The Coast Guard is a multi-faceted maritime organization consisting of military, law enforcement and interagency roles and responsibilities; and normally operates under the Department of Homeland Security, not the Department of Defense. The submarine force should continue coordinated operations with Coast Guard and other agencies as part of Joint Interagency Task Force-South; the highly successful counterdrug operations in the Gulf of Mexico and in the littorals of South America. In forward-deployed locations, the submarine should also continue to leverage its multi-mission capabilities in supporting law enforcement efforts such as maritime interdiction operations, counter-piracy operations, and visit board search and seizure missions.

Since CIC efforts are generally less about combat operations and can be focused more on enhanced cooperative security and building stronger partnerships, revolutionary

new approaches in “Soft Power” are touted as the new strategic paradigm for policy makers.<sup>23</sup> It is believed that a comprehensive government approach, also known as a “whole-of government approach,” can serve as an economy of force in CIC by employing “lines of effort” to facilitate communications and coordinated efforts, unify actions, eliminate stovepipes, improve efficiencies, and leverage unique capabilities and resources across a myriad of disparate organizations consisting of the U.S. armed services, the interagency, coalition military and civilian partners, non-governmental organizations, international governmental organizations and host nation. Due to space limitations and operational security requirements, all of these organizations cannot be represented onboard the submarine conducting CIC operations. However, pre-deployment mission-specific training as well as assigning onboard civilian or military specialists could greatly enhance submarine crew’s political and military situational awareness of the region or country of concern and their ability to effectively carry out the CIC mission.

#### Submarine Force Organizational International Engagement

The submarine force as an organization significantly contributes to CIC efforts through several initiatives and fleet exercise programs that actively engage the international community and directly promote preventive security and building partner capacity with allies and partner nations; thus enhancing cooperative security and stronger partnerships, the long-term goal of the Navy CIC vision. One good example of engagement to preempt irregular challenges is the Diesel Electric Submarine Initiative.

The Diesel Electric Submarine Initiative (DESI) is a fleet exercise support program involving diesel submarines from predominantly South American navies such as

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<sup>23</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-first Century,” *Foreign Affairs* Volume 86, Issue 6 (November/December 2007): 2-18.

Peru, Chile and Columbia. DESI countries train with U.S. Navy forces in both large and small exercises to achieve fleet anti-submarine warfare training objectives. Since the U.S. submarine force does not have diesel electric submarines and many of our adversaries do, DESI enables U.S. submarines to train in real-world environments, thus enhancing warfighting proficiency against this very capable platform. The program also contributes to the mutual benefit of DESI participating submarine forces through coordinated naval operations with the U.S. Navy. This type of engagement to enhance cooperative security in support of CIC also extends beyond DESI to other initiatives.

Following the sinking of the Russian submarine *Kursk* in 2000, NATO formed the International Submarine Escape and Rescue Organization (ISMERLO) whose purpose is to coordinate international submarine escape and rescue efforts. ISMERLO is sponsored by Commander, U.S. Submarine Forces, and reports to the NATO command, Allied Submarine Command, both in Norfolk, VA. Although initially formed through NATO, most of the world's submarine operating nations participate in ISMERLO. The Submarine Escape and Rescue Working Group (SMERWG) was established through which submarine rescue procedures and technical specifications are standardized, fostering compatibility and interoperability of submarines and rescue systems. ISMERLO also established a coordination web site that contains a database of submarine and rescue systems information; through which participating nations would actually coordinate an international effort to rescue the crew of a sunken submarine on the bottom of the ocean. ISMERLO and SMERWG facilitate multinational cooperation and coordination of the submarine rescue mission and provide a neutral environment for submarine force representatives from rival and adversary navies to come together in harmony in support

of this unclassified humanitarian mission. International submarine rescue training and coordination amongst participating nations contributes to theater security cooperation and builds national capacity, both of which are desired Navy CIC outcomes.

The submarine force contains submarine rescue systems and equipment at the Deep Submergence Unit (DSU), San Diego, CA. The submarine rescue team, consisting of active and reserve component sailors and government contractors, regularly participate in international submarine rescue exercises such as Pacific Reach, hosted every three years by a Pacific-Rim nation, and Bold Monarch, hosted every three years by a NATO European nation. DSU and its reporting command, Commander, Submarine Development Squadron Five, also conduct very active military-to-military engagement programs with allies and partner nations, conducting submarine rescue and escape training on equipment, systems, procedures, medical requirements, standardization and rescue certification requirements, logistics, and command and control. The submarine force considers all these submarine rescue program initiatives as key elements of theater security cooperation and building partner capacity in allied and partner navies, thereby supporting the Navy's vision of CIC.

Finally, the submarine force participates in additional major U.S. fleet exercises such as RIMPAC, UNITAS and ANNUALEX. The navies and submarine forces from many of our allies and partners come together in mutually beneficial joint and combined training. The submarine force also supports international engagement through port visits and officer exchange programs. All these efforts contribute to the Navy CIC vision by promoting preventive security and building partner capacity, thus enhancing cooperative security and stronger partnerships.

## **CHAPTER 7:**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As previously discussed, the U.S. Navy is predominantly focused on four confronting irregular challenges (CIC) missions: maritime security force assistance, maritime security, maritime stability operations, and counterinsurgency/counterterrorism, all enabled by the supporting function of information dominance. There are three desired Navy CIC results: preventive security, building partner capacity, and countering manifest threats. There is one desired Navy CIC long-term goal: enhanced cooperative security and stronger partnerships. The author attempted to derive Navy CIC capabilities and requirements from broad joint irregular warfare capabilities and requirements and to further distill expected submarine force capabilities required to support Navy CIC efforts.

However, concepts associated with conducting irregular warfare have been aggressively debated over the past decade with an unclear path ahead. In certain circles, the term itself falls in and out of favor on a periodic basis and often produces visceral reactions in those organizations and agencies that “do not do warfare.”<sup>1</sup> Combating irregular threats implies much more than conventional warfare solutions since the adversary, most often, is a non-traditional, non-state actor, criminal or insurgent in failing or failed states or regions. Senior military and policy makers have espoused non-military solutions in defeating irregular threats, and have placed even more emphasis on preventing them from occurring in the first place. But from the perspective of the military professional, it is sometimes difficult to convert nebulous strategic concepts and ill-defined requirements into well understood military capabilities and activities. The linkage

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Fawcett, e-mail message to author, March 6, 2011.

between the Department of Defense's irregular warfare programs and concepts is, at best, loosely tied to the Navy's CIC concept and efforts.

Just as every other U.S. armed force, the Navy wants to remain relevant in today's Global War on Terror and complex operational environment consisting of combating numerous irregular threats. Relevance is tied to programs and capabilities which are ultimately linked to budgets and dollars. The Navy stood up the Navy Irregular Warfare Office (NIWO) to synchronize irregular warfare capabilities and requirements across the Navy in support of U.S. Special Operations Command and the Combatant Commanders. However, NIWO discovered that irregular warfare, more of a niche mission area, was not broad enough to encompass all the desired approaches contained in the October 2007 unified maritime strategy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*. Therefore, NIWO developed and entered the term "irregular challenges" and the activity of "confronting irregular challenges" (CIC) into the Navy lexicon which had the benefit of vaguely describing concepts not associated with being considered as "warfare" and served as a catch-all for the strategy contained in the January 2010 *The U.S. Navy's Vision for Confronting Irregular Challenges*. The term "irregular challenges" is never precisely defined and CIC is unrefined as a specific activity, but instead, is described as a means, in the context of missions, desired objectives and goals. CIC wades into and out of the realm of irregular warfare joint concepts, includes some activities, excludes others, and includes other additional activities; thus providing both confusion and contradiction when trying to determine Navy and submarine force CIC requirements and capabilities. From the submarine force perspective, irregular warfare generally means special operations forces, embarked on guided missile submarines, supporting U.S. Special

Operations Command and the Combatant Commander; irregular challenges and the activity of CIC are not so clear.

## **Conclusions**

It is not definitive or conclusive from this study, that a submarine as a platform can be an optimum and cost-effective weapon for supporting the Navy's strategic vision of confronting irregular challenges (CIC). It appears to have only limited application for CIC. Competing demands on the submarine as a national asset in support of the Combat Commander's requirements, current submarine force leadership perspectives and operational paradigms, submarine-specific strengths in support of traditional missions, and weaknesses and other limitations reveal themselves to suggest that the submarine as having limited applications for effectively conducting CIC. However, it has been shown that the submarine force, as an organization, can be an effective contributor to the Navy CIC vision.

Therefore, the submarine may have some limited but practical application for supporting Navy and joint force commander CIC efforts. From this analysis of joint irregular warfare concepts, Navy CIC vision and submarine force capabilities, three confusing but complementary factors are apparent: the submarine possesses capabilities which are broadly applicable for many different mission sets, both traditional and irregular; CIC and irregular warfare capabilities are shared among the other armed services as well as within the Navy itself; and capabilities explicitly required for CIC are vaguely defined by Navy doctrine and absent from most submarine force Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs).

The initial proposition of the submarine force's contribution to the joint force in CIC is based on the understanding that the Navy can indeed support the Chief of Naval Operations' vision for CIC and that a submarine possesses valuable capabilities that can be applied in support of CIC efforts. However, complicating the matter is the fact that most, if not all traditional submarine capabilities can be applied to missions involving both irregular and conventional threats. Unlike the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps, the Navy and the submarine force do not hold irregular warfare as a core mission area; rather, the Navy and submarine force *support* U.S. Special Operations Command in the conduct of irregular warfare. Therefore, it is not obvious whether the Navy possesses the appropriate capabilities for CIC, or even which resources to employ. This is especially apparent with the submarine, whose limited force structure is in short supply and getting smaller.

All of the U.S armed services and certain U.S. agencies have similar capabilities for supporting or conducting irregular warfare and for conducting CIC. Examples include: intelligence collection and analysis, precise engagement, information operations and command and control. Because of these shared capabilities, it is not clear to the joint force commander which CIC capability from which service or civilian agency is the most appropriate to employ to accomplish the desired CIC effort; and even within the maritime domain, it is not clear whether to employ submarine CIC capabilities or those from another Navy asset or resource. The U.S. military at-large needs to better understand and integrate CIC requirements, capabilities and resources across all services through doctrine and other military publications.

As a result of this lack of specific requirements and large pool of potential contributors, there are no defined, submarine-specific TTPs for conducting CIC, and it is not clear which submarine force capabilities are most appropriate to leverage in order to maximize contribution to the joint force. Without appropriate TTPs which are linked back to specifically desired submarine force CIC required capabilities, it is difficult to identify and justify submarine-specific programs and resources. Additionally, submariners have to learn to adapt current TTPs, optimize the utility of the existing submarine sensors and capabilities in new, and perhaps different ways, and to best carry out the assigned mission in the hope of producing the desired CIC results in support of joint force and national security objectives.

For the submarine force, this naturally reveals the following questions pertaining to the applicable and viable use of submarines for CIC missions: What submarine force capabilities are uniquely or most suitable for addressing irregular challenges? Can general purpose fast attack submarines (SSNs), not just special operations forces based guided missile submarines (SSGNs), contribute more to CIC than other service capabilities? How much CIC can the submarine force afford to conduct in light of dwindling force structure and constrained budgets? These questions need to be answered in greater detail and require further, focused study.

### **Recommendations**

This paper argues that the submarine force is uniquely capable but exhibits limited capacity in supporting the Combatant Commander's requirements in confronting irregular challenges. The multi-mission capable submarine can serve as the Navy's premier stealth platform through persistent, continuous and sustained at-sea operations,

and can provide the Combatant Commander with a flexibility of options, unmatched by any other navy platform. This applies to irregular warfare as well as conventional or traditional warfare.

If the submarine force desires to extend its contribution in support of irregular warfare missions, it must recognize irregular threats as our most likely and main adversaries of the near future. The submarine can be seen as a relevant weapons system allowing the force to be a better part of this fight. It can do this by establishing commonality of the SSGN Battle Management Center while developing new irregular warfare requirements for the *Virginia* class, and developing new technologies applicable to irregular warfare missions. The submarine force should plan to identify all facets of irregular warfare where a submarine can participate and be a force multiplier to the joint force. Although the SSGN is the premier submarine irregular warfare platform, synergies of effort do not exist specifically in the areas of: procurement of analysis equipment, systems integration, across the submarine force as a whole and with other platforms, and across the joint force. The submarine force should recognize and expand its role in the range of CIC missions.

The submarine is a flexible, agile, multi-mission asset, but the submarine force does not emphasize comprehensive government approaches. Confronting irregular challenges is not just a military problem but rather a national problem that requires long-term and enduring solutions and efforts. “Smart Power,” in the context of whole-of-government approaches, implies the requirement for undefined greater capacity and proficiencies. For example, will CIC competencies such as language skills, regional expertise, and cultural awareness be inherent in current submarine force capabilities, or

will they be developed through specific pre-deployment training, or contained in ad hoc specialized niche elements? The Submarine force must determine how to incorporate readiness for CIC and Smart Power implications into overall readiness for conventional warfighting skills and traditional submarine missions.

Finally, the best example of submarine force contribution to the Navy CIC vision is through its force-wide organizational international engagement programs: Diesel Electric Submarine Initiative, International Submarine Escape and Rescue Organization, submarine rescue international exercises and bi-lateral training programs, and fleet exercises. The Navy should give priority to funding these efforts in future budgets since they most tangibly support the long-term Navy CIC goal of producing enhanced cooperative security and stronger international partnerships.

### **Summary**

The Navy's vision for confronting irregular challenges (CIC) appears to interpret specific and desired CIC missions to achieve results of preventive security, building partner capacity and countering manifest threats; all with the long-term goal of enhanced cooperative security. However, the non-joint doctrinal terms of "irregular challenges" and the activity of "confronting irregular challenges" remain loosely defined and therefore reduce the Navy's ability to precisely define requirements and solutions. Adding to the confusion is the Navy's approach to CIC which both incorporates and differentiates from more defined and pervasive joint irregular warfare concepts and elements. This results in unfocused and unclear Navy and unit-level CIC requirements and desired capabilities.

The submarine force generally sees itself supporting the more regularly defined irregular warfare missions through SSGN special operations. Some traditional submarine

force missions contribute to Navy CIC efforts in limited ways, but throughout the submarine force as an organization, there does not appear to be motivation to change, adjust or do more. Other competing Combatant Commander requirements have placed huge operational demands on the submarine force. Unresolved physical, technological and procedural submarine operational limitations continue to detract from true submarine integration into the joint force. Precise submarine force CIC capabilities and requirements are not clearly defined or resourced, resulting in current operational paradigms as part of traditional submarine missions, and thus, limited contribution to joint force CIC efforts.

The Navy needs to more clearly articulate unit-level, and specifically, submarine force unit-level desired CIC capabilities and requirements in order to optimize the submarine force's CIC contribution to the joint force. Additionally, the submarine force should develop a comprehensive strategy for optimizing its contribution to the joint force in confronting irregular challenges as well as traditional or conventional threat approaches. The submarine force can be a contributor but the specific need and requirement must be better defined.

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## VITA

Captain Michael T. Kubiniec, a native of Buffalo, New York, graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. Following nuclear propulsion and basic submarine training, he reported to *USS Haddo* (SSN 604) for his junior officer tour and qualified Submarine Warfare Officer and Nuclear Engineer Officer.

In 1988, he reported to *USS Tinosa* (SSN 606) where he served as Weapons Officer. In 1991, Captain Kubiniec reported to *USS Providence* (SSN 719), served as Combat Systems Officer, and qualified for Command of Submarines.

Captain Kubiniec affiliated with the Navy Reserve in 1995 and reported to U.S. Pacific Fleet Detachment 320 where he completed four duty assignments in the Pacific Fleet Command Center serving in Battle Watch and Crisis Action Teams.

His previous command tours include Navy Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Pacific Detachment 220, Commander, Submarine Squadron 11 Undersea Warfare Command Detachment, and Reserve Director for Submarine Escape and Rescue, Commander, Submarine Development Squadron 5 Headquarters Detachment.

While attending the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Captain Kubiniec is concurrently assigned as Commanding Officer, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Korea Detachment G.